

**THE PERCEIVED EFFECTS ON THREE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OF A CHARTER SCHOOL IN CALGARY, ALBERTA**

A Dissertation
Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Philosophy of Education
in the Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

by
Rick Sawa

November, 2003

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

PERMISSION TO USE POSTGRADUATE THESIS

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis, in whole or in part, should be addressed to:

Head of Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 0X1

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was, in the context of the communitarian-libertarian debate, to obtain the perceived effects of a charter school in Calgary, Alberta on three selected Calgary public schools, and to determine what could be learned from the workings of this charter school to improve the Calgary public education system.

By first looking at the macro debate—communitarianism vs libertarianism, and how globalization, deregulation and privatization, and the fear of an ineffective public education system impacts and is impacted by the debate, the stage was set to examine the micro debate—charter schools. Did the existence of the participating charter school in particular, and all Calgary charter schools in general, lead to a proliferation of charter schools in Calgary and/or to improved public schools?

A qualitative case study approach was utilized because it permitted the researcher to perform an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon, the effects of a charter school on public schools, from the perspective of the participants involved in the study. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups with representatives from the selected charter and public schools, Alberta Learning, and the Alberta Teachers' Association. School, board, and provincial documents were examined and used to describe the schools involved in the study and to inform the study. Validity was enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and a tape-recorded data audit.

It was shown that the macro debate has raged on for centuries and shows no sign of letting up. The researcher illustrated that equity is an important element of the debate and must continually be raised and discussed.

Qualitatively, interviews and focus groups provided the researcher with

information that indicated that both sides of the micro debate were proven to be correct. Proponents of school choice claimed that charter schools would increase diversity, which was proven to be the case. Opponents correctly maintained that charter schools had a detrimental effect on public school funding and tended to “cream” off the better students from CBE schools because they were not required to admit students with special needs.

Several implications were deduced from the study when data were discussed in relation to the research. From these came several recommendations for further research and practice.

Society has a decision to make. Are we in favour of an individualized or collective arrangement? Who benefits from the diversity created by charter schools and to whom is the government responding?

This study is dedicated to my three special granddaughters: Anja, Edyn,
and Melaina—their Papa’s contribution to a more equitable world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These past three years have been three of my best. I am very thankful for having had the opportunity for such a stimulating experience. The list of people to thank is substantial which makes it difficult to know where to start—so many individuals and organizations contributed significantly to this dissertation. I was fortunate to have had two topnotch advisors—Pat Renihan for my first year and Murray Scharf for my final two years. Pat started me off on the right track and Murray continually reminded me of the big picture. Thanks, you two. You will always be remembered. Also, a warm thank you is extended to my other committee members—Larry Sackney and Keith Walker—and my cognate Howard Woodhouse. Thanks for your constructive criticism, assistance, and encouragement. Jack Billinton’s chairing of both the oral and the defence was impeccable and much appreciated. Finally, a sincere thank you is offered to Jon Young, from the University of Manitoba, for adeptly serving as the external examiner. Your suggestions for improvement were taken to heart—I am convinced my final document is a superior one thanks to your input.

My sincere thanks goes to the teachers, students, parents, in-school administrators, central office staff, school trustees, and board members from the charter school and public schools that participated in the study. Alberta Learning and the Alberta Teachers’ Association are also congratulated for their contribution. Obviously, the research could not have been conducted were it not for the unselfish giving of time, by all participants, to improve education delivery. I sincerely applaud them for their involvement.

Tim Quigley, Deb Hopkins, and their children Ellen, Adria, and Julia have been wonderful friends through all of this. I always had a bed and an ear or two when I was in Saskatoon. They know how much I appreciate what they have done for me. The same has to be said for longtime friends June and Gary Lemke and their son Steve. I dread to think what might have been had I not been welcomed with their open arms while in Calgary.

My sincerest gratitude, clearly, is extended to my family for their encouragement and support. Thanks Tim and Ben— knowing you were both behind me made the whole process easier. My father, who constantly reminds me: “and from the boy who wanted to quit school”, worked hard for the betterment of his family and taught us the importance of hard work. He is, therefore, deserving of some of the credit, as is mom, who, if she was around, would be as proud as punch. Lastly, I do not have the words to express my deepest gratefulness to my wife, Janis—you can’t possibly know how much I appreciated your support. One thing is certain—I could not have succeeded without it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Rationale of Study.....	1
Background Information	1
Theoretical Debate	2
Gaps in Research.....	6
Purpose of Study	7
Assumptions.....	8
Delimitations.....	8
Limitations	8
Definitions.....	9
Significance of the Study	12
Theoretical Framework of Study	12
Organization of Dissertation	13
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	15
Introduction... ..	15
Introduction to the General Debate.....	15
What's at Stake for Education?.....	18
The Libertarian View and Charter Schools	21
The Libertarian Argument	21
Deregulation and Privatization.....	23
Reasons for Deregulation and Privatization.....	24

Ideological.....	24
Private versus public sector efficiency.....	25
Increased competition	26
Advantages of Deregulation and Privatization	26
Deregulation of Education and Privatization of Schools..	27
Shortcomings of Public Education.....	28
Underskilled Students	29
Critiques of Progressive Education.....	30
Imparted Values	32
Problems With Democracy	33
Lack of communication	33
Ineffective nature of democracy	33
Proponents' Arguments in Favour of School Choice	34
Internal Effects.....	36
Improve student achievement	37
Increase accountability.....	37
Provide a good education for poor children.....	38
Be more efficient.....	39
Improve education through increased autonomy and competition.....	39
External Effects.....	44
Increase diversity of schools.....	44
Cause public schools to be more responsive.....	45
The Communitarian View and Charter Schools	46
Communitarianism and Community Involvement.....	46
Deregulation and Privatization.....	48
Reasons for Deregulation and Privatization.....	49
Ideological.....	50
Private versus public sector efficiency.....	50
Increased competition	51
Private wealth gains	51
Elimination of unions.....	52
Disadvantages of Deregulation and Privatization.....	52
Alternatives to Deregulation and Privatization.....	56
Unfounded Shortcomings of Education.....	60
Critiques of Charter Schools.....	61
Internal Claims.....	64
Negative effects on students, teachers, and administrators.....	64
Loss of accountability	68
External Claims.....	69
Drain funds from public schools.....	70
“Cream” higher achieving students from public schools.....	70
Cost private schools their autonomy.....	72

Challenged Proponents' Internal Claims	73
No proof of improved student achievement.....	73
Not automatically more efficient	74
Not necessarily less bureaucratic	74
Challenged Proponents' External Claims	77
No proof of increased diversity of schools	77
Not necessarily more responsive.....	78
Concluding Statements	79
Present Schools of Choice.....	84
Summary	87
3. METHODOLOGY	89
Introduction.....	89
General Research Design	89
Specific Methodology	91
Selection of Schools.....	91
Charter School	91
Public Schools.....	92
Selection of Respondents	92
Charter School	93
Administrators.....	93
Teachers	93
Parents.....	93
Students.....	93
Public Schools.....	94
Administrators.....	94
Teachers	94
Parents.....	94
Students.....	94
Data Collection Procedures.....	94
Interviews.....	95
Focus groups	97
Instrumentation	97
Data Analysis	98
Validity	99
Generalizability.....	101
The Researcher.....	102
Ethics Approval	103
Summary	103
4. PRESENTATION AND SUMMARY OF DATA	105
Introduction.....	105
Charter School	106
Description of the Charter School.....	106
Reporting Data on Question of Changes in General.....	109
Parents.....	109

Teachers	110
Administrators.....	111
Focus Groups	112
Summary	113
Diversity.....	113
Parents.....	113
Teachers	114
Administrators.....	114
Focus Groups	114
Summary	114
Responsiveness	114
Parents.....	115
Teachers	115
Administrators.....	115
Focus Groups	116
Summary	116
Financial.....	116
Parents.....	116
Teachers	117
Administrators.....	117
Focus Groups	117
Summary	117
Accountability.....	118
Parents.....	118
Teachers	118
Administrators.....	119
Focus Groups	119
Summary	120
Students.....	120
Parents.....	120
Teachers	121
Administrators.....	122
Focus Groups	123
Summary	124
Teachers	124
Parents.....	125
Teachers	126
Administrators.....	127
Focus Groups	128
Summary	128
Equity.....	129
Parents.....	129
Teachers	129
Administrators.....	130
Focus Groups	131
Summary	131

Communitarian-Libertarian Debate	131
Parents	132
Teachers	133
Administrators	133
Focus Groups	134
Summary	134
Learnings	135
Parents	135
Teachers	135
Administrators	136
Focus Groups	138
Summary	139
Public Schools	139
Description of Three CBE Schools	140
Charter Schools	143
Parents	143
Teachers	145
Administrators	146
Focus Groups	147
Summary	149
Changes	150
Parents	150
Teachers	151
Administrators	152
Focus Groups	153
Summary	154
Diversity	155
Parents	155
Teachers	155
Administrators	156
Summary	156
Responsiveness	157
Parents	157
Teachers	158
Administrators	158
Focus Groups	159
Summary	159
Financial	159
Parents	159
Teachers	160
Administrators	160
Focus Groups	160
Summary	161
Accountability	161
Parents	161
Teachers	162

Administrators.....	162
Focus Groups	162
Summary	163
Students.....	163
Parents.....	163
Teachers	164
Administrators.....	165
Focus Groups	165
Summary	166
Teachers	166
Parents.....	166
Teachers	168
Administrators.....	170
Focus Groups	171
Summary	173
Equity.....	173
Parents.....	173
Teachers	174
Administrators.....	174
Focus Groups	175
Summary	176
Special Education.....	176
Parents.....	176
Teachers	178
Administrators.....	178
Focus Groups	179
Summary	179
Communitarian-Libertarian Debate	180
Parents.....	180
Teachers	181
Administrators.....	182
Focus Groups	182
Summary	183
Learnings.....	183
Parents.....	184
Teachers	184
Administrators.....	186
Focus Groups	187
Summary	187
Alberta Learning	187
Charter Schools.....	187
Changes.....	188
Financial.....	189
Accountability.....	189
Teachers	190
Equity	191

Communitarian-Libertarian Debate	191
Alberta Teachers' Association	192
Charter Schools	192
Changes	192
Diversity	193
Responsiveness	193
Financial	193
Accountability	194
Students	194
Teachers	194
Equity	195
Special Education	195
Learnings	196
Summary of Data	196
Parents	197
Teachers	201
Administrators	203
XYZ Charter School vs Calgary Board of Education	205
Summary Reflections	208
5. SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	212
Introduction	212
Summary of the Findings	213
Micro Debate—Charter Schools	216
Equity	218
Streaming	219
Special education	221
Knowledge of XYZ and other Charter Schools	221
Admissions/Expulsions Policies	222
Busing	224
Class Size	224
Parental Involvement	228
Private School or Public School	228
Labour Process Theory	229
Control	231
Deskilling Teachers	232
Curriculum	234
Teaching form a Script	235
Business Influence	236
Unions	237
Concluding Thoughts on the Micro Debate	240
Macro Debate—Communitarianism Versus Libertarianism	245
The New Right	245
Communitarian-Libertarian Debate	246
The Study's Contribution to the Macro Debate	250
Communitarian Solution for Troubled Public Schools	251

Recommendations for Further Research.....	256
Recommendations for Practice	257
Concluding Remarks.....	257
Reconceptualized Theoretical Framework.....	268
 REFERENCES	 272
 APPENDIX A: Participant Interview and Focus Group Questions.....	 291
APPENDIX B: Correspondence—Letters to Boards, Principals, Interviewees, and Focus Group Participants	298
APPENDIX C: Consent and Data Release Forms.....	315
APPENDIX D: Ethics Approval.....	320
Ethics Approval Form.....	321

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.	Summary of Responses to Interview Questions	198
2.	Summary of Responses to Interview Questions	199

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Theoretical Framework	14
2. Reconceptualized Theoretical Framework.....	270
3. Relationship between the Macro and Micro Debate.....	271

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of Study

There is significant dissatisfaction with the present education system and a concomitant demand for change (Apple & Beane, 1995; Chubb & Moe, 1990, 1995; Davis, 1990; Friedman, 1997; Glickman, 1993; Harrison & Kachur, 1999; Nathan, 1999; Osborne, 1999; Repo, 1998). However, agreement on if or how the delivery of education should be restructured is elusive. This delivery dilemma is part of the macro debate between individualistic libertarians and collectivistic communitarians. On the one hand, some educators contend that the present publicly funded and governed education system should be strengthened by encouraging increased democratic actions. Others maintain that competition should be injected into education delivery because the current monopoly enjoyed by the public system is making it inefficient and ineffective. Charter schools are one form of delivery, they argue, that would lead to desired improvements because they would address the issues of effectiveness and efficiency. The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether or not the reported effects of a charter school on the public schools are manifest.

Background Information

Proponents of charter schools are either ideologically opposed to government control of education or genuinely believe that economic competition will improve public schooling (Guthrie, 1983). The public schools were seen by charter school advocates, wrote Catterall (1984), as monopolistic enterprises that have the power to decide who is qualified to teach, as well as what is to be taught, without much concern for what parents might feel is right for their children. Birkett (2000) and Nathan (1999) suggested that charter schools had been advocated

because it was felt that they were a way of injecting necessary competition into school systems.

School choice advocates claimed that they could provide educational services more effectively and efficiently than could a publicly governed system (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997). The theory followed that schools would have strong incentives to do things that would attract students or lose them to competitors with a resultant loss of funds. It was assumed that the market, through the mechanism of choice, would create higher quality education for everyone.

According to Dobbin (2001) and Plawiuk (1997), public education has been under attack for over a decade. “The underlying theme behind the criticism is the notion that market principles must be applied to virtually every aspect of the provision of all public services” (Dobbin, 2001, p. 2). Plawiuk (1997) claimed that lobby groups argued that,

...the lack of competition and parental control is the root cause of the poor performance of our schools...[T]he realistic solution to the current difficulties lies in increasing parental and student choice, deregulation, and ultimately the privatization of schools. By enabling unencumbered competition among schools, incentives for excellence will emerge, leading to dramatic improvements in education. (p. 146)

Furthermore, Plawiuk stated that those critical of public education maintained that schools that answered to the concerns of their customers would become far more effective organizations than those that forced a particular approach upon a locale.

Theoretical Debate

The macro debate is philosophical in nature. Proponents of deregulated education systems and schools-for-profit have developed a political-economic rationale for such approaches. Libertarians viewed competition and marketplace ideology as the keys to school

reform (Boaz, 1997; Friedman, 1997; Kymlicka, 1990). Whereas communitarians, who favor a democratic determination of a common good (Bellah, 1998; Etzioni, 1993, 1996, 1998, Kymlicka, 1990; Selznick, 1992), preferred the strengthening of publicly financed and governed schools.

The veracity of proponents' claims that deregulation resulted in a more effective and efficient way of operating schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Friedman, 1997) had yet to be established (Apple, 2000a; Giroux, 1998; Lowe, 1992b). Allowing total self-determination, as promised by school choice schemes such as charter schools, could become "an expression of indifference rather than concern" (Kymlicka, 1990, p. 200). Also he stated that communitarians wondered if democracy would prevail when individual rights were dominant over collective decisions. Benton-Evans (1997) stated,

...the notion of citizen is largely abandoned in favour of thinking of oneself in exclusive terms, remote from any sense of wider obligation. Factions of parents anxiously maneuver to promote their own agenda, indifferent to the consequences of their demands for others.... It is becoming more acceptable to ignore the needs of wider communities and to be more openly resentful about the cost of measures to help the children of the poor and powerless. The most marginal groups thus become burdened with the responsibility of their own plight. (p. 146)

There are dissenters who claim that a certain segment of society will benefit from deregulation and privatization of educational services while others will not fare so well (Apple, 2000a; Giroux, 1998; Lowe, 1992b). Children from wealthier homes, argued critics, might gain from charter schools more than anyone else (Catterall, 1984; Connell, Ashenden, Kessler, & Dowsett, 1982; Lareau, 1989; Lowe, 1992b; Muller, 1983). These parents would likely be more

sophisticated shoppers and search out more detailed information about potential choices (Lareau, 1989). Wealthier families would also have more access to private and public transportation, thereby widening the range of school choices. Thus, a problem with choice programs is their tendency to reward the initiative of some at the expense of equity for all. According to Lowe (1992b), deregulated charter schools,

...would enable the more affluent to free themselves from the yoke of all legislative and legal safeguards people won through the reform struggle of the 1960s. It furthermore will free the rich from all public educational responsibilities, striking a major blow against the current multicultural effort that seeks a radical expansion of democracy and a reinvigorated vision of community. The implementation of choice would be victory for a narrow class interest over community, accelerating the drastic maldistribution of opportunity that exists today. (p. 34)

Not only do charter schools diminish the value of community, they also contribute to a more individualistic way of thinking about society in general (Apple, 2000a; Dobbin, 1997).

Consequently, the gap between rich and poor, between bright and not so bright, would be widened. The equalizing effect of public education could be lost (Young, 1981). A failure to recognize the broad political and economic contexts in which education is embedded frequently confuses people and renders debates about education narrow and unrewarding.

The choice that charter schools offer is between weakening the public schools still further by encouraging flight from them, and strengthening the public schools by "recalling them to their historical purpose of promoting the ideals of the democratic civic community: liberty and equality and justice and personal obligation for the public good" (Butts, 1979, p. 9). Unregulated school choice programs, like all market-driven and privatized models, are part of a larger and

quite aggressive ideological movement,

...to change how we think about our society and our participation in it. They assume without question that 'public' is by definition bad and 'private' is by definition good....

Citizenship is now defined as simply consumer choice. The unattached individual makes the choice about her or his life, without caring what its effects are on the rest of society.

(Apple, 2000a, p. 24)

According to communitarians, it is the balance between individual or family choice and the public interest that must be emphasized. To ignore the public interest "in favor of a consumer sovereignty of choice is to ignore the public purposes of schooling" (James & Levin, 1983, p. 30). Benton-Evans (1997) eloquently and succinctly stated that "there is a societal need to get away from educational reforms which are culturally exclusive and socially unjust. The alternative is to give up on democratic citizenship, thus making victims of those who are most disadvantaged through a process that facilitates individual gain at the expense of collective loss" (p. 151).

Critics argued that "a common view of the requirements of full citizenship seems best served through a common educational system" (Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1984, p.31).

Although the tendency to segregation by income seems to be inherent in the public education system (Coons, 1978) by limiting poor peoples' ability to choose where to live (Connell et al., 1982), critics argued that unregulated schools of choice would further impede efforts to mix children from different backgrounds in our classrooms (Catterall, 1984; Fowler, 1980; Garms, Guthrie, & Pierce, 1988; Muller, 1983; Wise & Darling-Hammond, 1984). The result might be more stratification by social class from generation to generation and less tolerance of individual and group differences in our society.

There was, therefore, agreement among writers that schools of choice would affect public schools; some stated that the effects were positive while others argued that the effects were negative. Agreement existed that schools could be improved. The great macro debate between libertarians and communitarians has raged on for centuries and is still prominent in our discussions about structuring our society, including education.

Gaps in Research

The same disagreement regarding the effects of schools of choice on public schools was apparent in the research to date. In the U.S., the existence of charter schools expanded from one state in 1991 to 33 states in 1998. Congress appropriated \$100 million to expand the number of charter schools to 3000 by 2001. In 1998, for-profit charter schools taught some 100,000 kindergarten through twelfth grade students in about 200 charter schools (Birkett, 2000). At present, there are 10 charter schools in Canada—all in Alberta which enacted charter school legislation in 1994 (Bosetti, Foulkes, O'Reilly, & Sande, 2000). Of the 12 charter schools created, 10 were operational at the time of this study.

Bosetti et al. (2000), in their final report on a 2-year in-depth study of charter schools in Alberta, stated that there was little evidence, not no evidence, to support the proposition that charter schools “create a two-tier education system and stream away the ‘cream of the crop’ from the public education system” (p. 172). According to Harrison and Kachur (1999), Alberta’s restructuring of education “has been and continues to be ideologically driven” and that “under the guise of increasing public input, the government has in fact centralized authority and decreased equality of student opportunity while opening market niches for private entrepreneurs” (p. xiv).

Purpose of Study

Bosetti et al. (2000) admitted that their study focused primarily on the evolution of the charter school movement in Alberta and the experience of charter school pioneers, and did not address the impact of charter schools on public education. In the section of the report entitled areas for future research, they stated that there was a need for research that examined the “lessons we can learn from this experiment that can be shared with and incorporated into the larger public education system” (p. 173). Sarason (1998), on writing about the American charter school movement, stated similar concerns about the lack of research on the effects of charter schools on public schools. It was apparent that serious gaps existed in the research about the effects of charter schools on students and communities, and what charter schools had to offer to improve existing public schools.

The purpose of this study was, in the context of the communitarian-libertarian debate at the macro level, to obtain the perceived effects of a charter school, at the micro level, on three selected public schools in Calgary, Alberta by seeking answers to the following questions:

1. **what impact does a charter school in Calgary, Alberta have on three selected public schools, in particular, and public schools in general, as perceived by participants?**
 - a) **proponents claim charter schools increase diversity of choice and responsiveness to the needs of parents and are more accountable,**
 - b) **opponents argue that charter schools adversely affect public schools financially, ‘cream’ off the better students, and are less accountable, and;**
2. **in that context, what can be learned from this charter school that could help to improve the public education system?**

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study:

- 1) participants' perceptions of the effects of charter schools on the public education system were considered to be the manifest effects;
- 2) participants' assessments of the lessons learned from charter schools that could improve the delivery of public education were the lessons learned;
- 3) school was in operation long enough to have a potential effect on the public system;
- 4) effects were sufficiently manifest that they were observable by the respondents; and
- 5) effects on the public schools observed by the respondents were attributable to the creation and operation of the charter school.

Delimitations

This qualitative study was conducted in Calgary, Alberta with interviews taking place in November and December 2001 and April and May 2002. Only charter schools and public schools previously attended by students from the selected charter school were considered. No homeschoolers or private schools were involved in the study. Board members, administrators, teachers, students, and parents from one charter school and from three public schools previously attended by students from the charter school under investigation were interviewed individually and in small groups. An Alberta Learning official and an Alberta Teachers' Association official were also interviewed individually. All interviews were carried out to ascertain the perceived effects on the public schools of the establishment and operation of the charter school involved in the study.

Limitations

This study had the following limitations:

- 1) Findings cannot be generalized beyond the charter school and public schools that were studied.
- 2) In the interviews, participants may not have, for several reasons, responded candidly, openly, and objectively to questions related to the effects of charter schools on public education and to what could be learned from charter schools to improve the effectiveness of public education.
- 3) Because actual interviews were conducted over a relatively short period of time, the researcher may not have obtained an accurate picture of the broader impact of charter schools on public education.
- 4) The perceptions of persons other than those directly involved in the charter school and public schools under study were not considered. Therefore, the view developed of the relationship between the charter school and public schools may have excluded valuable insights of some parents and community members.
- 5) Data from interview and focus group transcripts were used in their original form, as told by informants, so the researcher could have reported unchecked facts and claims in spite of member checking. No corrections, grammatical or otherwise, were made.
- 6) During the interviews and focus groups, description was thick for the micro debate about charter schools but was thin for the macro debate—communitarian versus libertarian.
- 7) The definitions of such terms as accountability, average student, better student, and notions of choice were not pursued. The researcher looked at perceptions, not conceptions.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of terms have been adopted:

- 1) ***Schools of choice:*** Schools of choice were broadly conceived to include alternate programs/schools, magnet schools, private/independent schools, religious schools, voucher systems, for-profit schools, and charter schools. This study concentrated on charter schools.
- 2) ***Charter school:*** Charter schools are schools operating under a written contract, or charter, from a local school board or some other organization such as a state or provincial government. These contracts stipulate how the school is held accountable for improved student improvement, in exchange for being immune from rules and regulations that apply to publicly funded and governed schools, including compulsory membership by teachers in a union.
- 3) ***For-profit schools:*** Their purpose is to make money. Some charter schools are run for profit.
- 4) ***Public schools:*** Public schools are those that receive public funds, are run by democratically elected board members, and deliver a common curriculum as designated by a state or provincial department of education. Teachers automatically belong to a teachers' union.
- 5) ***Effects on public schools:*** These were changes, perceived by respondents, that occurred in the public schools participating in the study and attributed to the establishment and operation of the charter school (external effects). Internal effects were considered to be the effects of the charter school on its constituents and were part of the discussion but not part of the study.
- 6) ***Teacher:*** A teacher was defined as a person employed by the charter school and public schools participating in this study.

- 7) **Board of education:** A board of education was the assemblage of duly elected officials responsible for the participating public schools and the Board overseeing the charter school involved in this study.
- 8) **In-school administrators:** In-school administrators were principals and vice-principals of the public schools and the charter school participating in this study.
- 9) **Central office personnel:** Central office personnel were those responsible for the public schools participating in this study.
- 10) **Union officials:** Union officials were members of the Alberta Teachers' Association.
- 11) **Administrators:** To enhance unanimity, administrators included Board members, trustees, central office staff, and in-school administrators.
- 12) **Democracy:** "A form of government in which political power resides in all the people and is exercised by them directly...(Avis, 1989, p. 355).
- 13) **Libertarian:** A libertarian is "one who advocates liberty of thought or conduct, especially in politics or civil affairs" (Avis, 1989, p. 780). Libertarianism is based on "ontological individualism" which is the belief that truth is found in our isolated selves rather than through society and relations with others. It is a system of liberation and not one of belonging. Libertarians favour individual choice to a common good. Also, they interpret democracy to mean minimum impingement of personal freedom and the right to vote every 4-5 years.
- 14) **Communitarian:** A communitarian is "a member of or a believer in a communistic community" (Avis, 1989, p. 274). Communitarian thinking characterizes a good society as one that achieves balance between social order and autonomy. Communitarians believe that democracy is meant to be utilized to gain consensus on a common good.

- 15) **Equity:** “Fairness or impartiality; justness” (Avis, 1989, p. 448). Not to be confused with equality because not all people will necessarily be treated equally.

Significance of the Study

The literature on the macro libertarian-communitarian and the micro school choice debates was replete with expository statements on the effects of a marketplace on public education. Libertarians claimed that schools would be more effective and efficient with competition; and charter school proponents claimed that charter schools would offer parents more diversity, force public schools to be more responsive to the needs and wishes of parents, and be more accountable than public schools. On the other hand, communitarians argued that public schools need to be improved through increased support and by being truly democratic; charter school opponents maintained that charter schools “cream off” the better students, received public money normally earmarked for public schools, and were less accountable than public schools. Through this study, the researcher attempted to provide evidential substance to these expository statements of effects.

Theoretical Framework of Study

As was shown in the review of the literature, the macro debate between libertarians and communitarians had risen to the level of public controversy. The struggle is between two political-economic philosophies. One consists of furthering individual rights and choice; the other professes the superiority of the collective good. The macro debate is further heightened by the increased role of globalization, by calls for deregulation and privatization, and by the criticisms of public education leveled by business and dissatisfied parents.

The macro debate led to the micro debate of school choice. Libertarians are convinced that school choice, in the form of charter schools, would improve both the effectiveness and

efficiency of education delivery. On the other hand, communitarians argue that charter schools would lead to a more self-centred society where the common good was sacrificed for individual rights and choice. Proponents claim internal and external benefits of charter schools while opponents warn of possible negative internal and external effects. The tenets of the arguments of both the libertarian and communitarian advocates are, in large part, derived from the perceived effects on schools. Thus, this study concentrated on the external effects of charter schools on the public school system by attempting to discover whether or not the existence of charter schools would lead to improvements in public schools or would contribute to their demise. The theoretical framework is depicted in **Figure 1** on page 14.

Organization of Dissertation

This chapter dealt with the rationale and purpose of the study. Research questions, relevant definitions, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations were presented. Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of the literature related to charter schools and their possible effects on public schools. A description of the research methodology utilized in this study is furnished in Chapter 3. The results of the study, accompanied by a summary and discussion of the findings that were guided by the research questions, is found in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 contains relevant conclusions gleaned from the analysis of the findings and implications for education delivery. Recommendations for further research on charter schools and related topics, and for practice, are also provided.

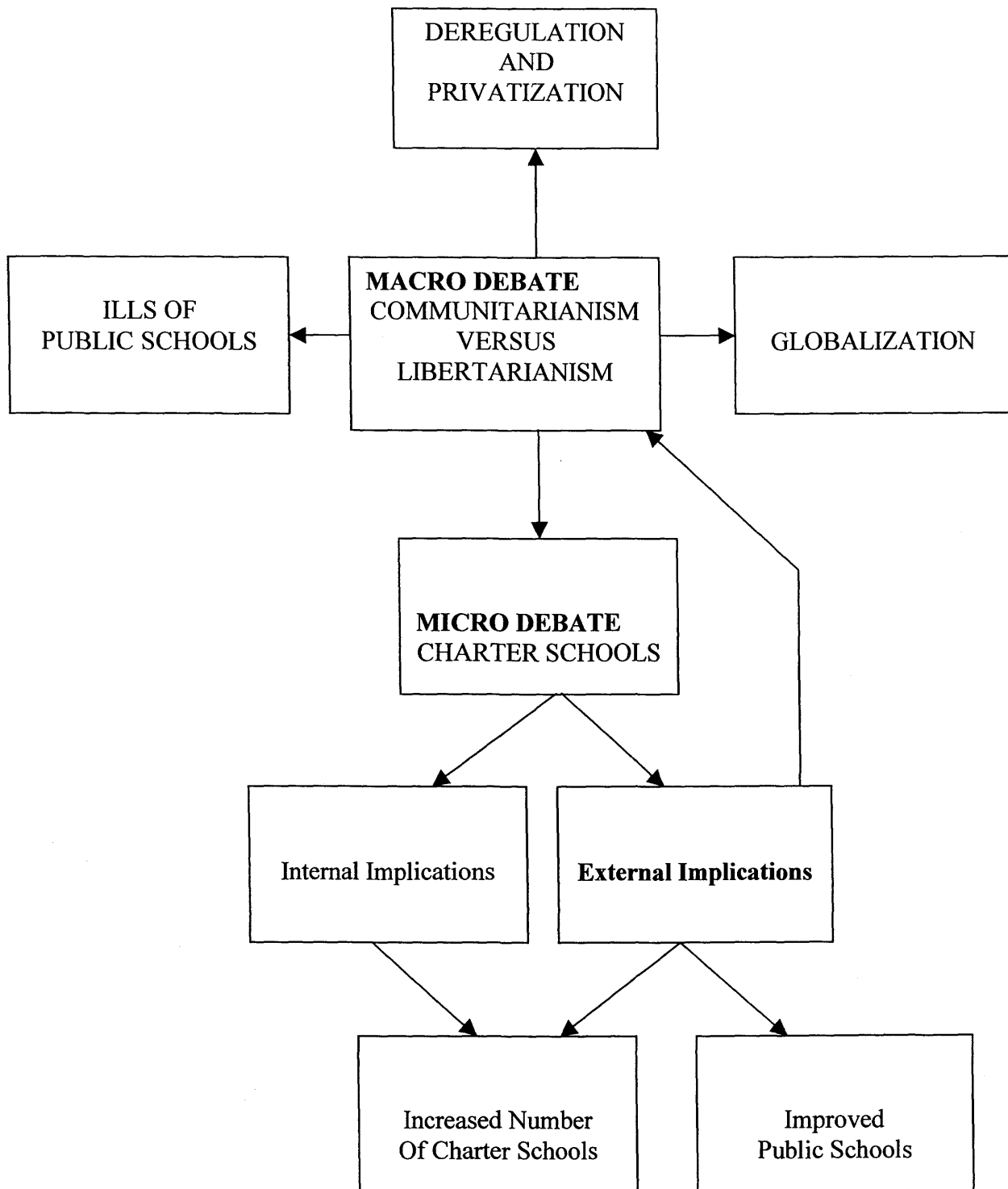


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The purposes of this chapter are to present the libertarian-communitarian debate at both the macro and micro levels; to list the espoused internal and external effects of charter schools on their own operations and those of the public schools, respectively; and to present the results of studies of these effects. The list of external effects, the effects of a charter school on the public schools, provides the framework for the structural portion of the interviews.

In order to achieve these purposes, this review of the literature includes a general description of the libertarian-communitarian debate; a statement on the libertarian view and charter schools; a parallel statement on the communitarian view and charter schools; and the claims of each view of the internal and external effects of charter schools on public schools.

Introduction to the General Debate

There are those who claim that public education has failed society and that encouraging competition will improve education. Of course, others argue that public education has been purposely underfunded and then blamed for many of the problems, social and economic included, ailing society today. To further confound matters, the political-philosophical controversy, considered to be the macro debate, between communitarians, who favour strengthening public education, and libertarians, who profess privatization of educational services, has raged on for the past three centuries (Taylor, 1995) and shows no indication of letting up. This section of the review describes the debate and points out the importance of critically examining the libertarian claim that individualism is preferable to collectivism. Add to this mix the pressures brought forth by globalization, another macro issue, and the claim that

public schools are failing society, and one can begin to see that this is not a narrow and simple debate as some writers would lead us to believe. Before this section finally addresses charter schools, the micro concern in question, it looks at privatization of public services in general.

In this portion of the review the researcher endeavors to point out the potential power of transnationals through trade agreements, a macro level issue, and the abandonment by government of its responsibility to uphold the common good. The effects of globalization through trade agreements on education are discussed. It is noted that a move towards privatizing public services, including education, is a distinct possibility.

It has been suggested that globalization, through so-called free trade agreements, is setting the stage for the takeover of education by transnational corporations. Tax cut after tax cut, in order to compete in the “race to the bottom”, are ensuring that less money is available for the civil commons which is, according to McMurtry (1998), “the organized, unified, and community-funded capacity of universally accessible resources of society to protect and to enable the lives of its members as an end in itself” (p. 376). The problem this poses, warn Calvert and Kuehn (1993), is that “charity from business,” in the name of so-called partnerships and adoptions, “rather than taxation of business, puts power in the hands of business to set the agenda for education” (p. 58).

When a government is highly developed, it naturally becomes one with the civil commons (McMurtry, 1998). However, the “marketplace god” is demanding that “the state's decision-structures dismantle the civil commons to reroute their revenues to private market interests” (McMurtry, 1998, p. 371). He argued that governments had abandoned their responsibility of protecting the common interest. Staff (1999c) supported this statement when it stated, “[a] global system of enforceable rules is being created where corporations have all the

rights, governments have all the obligations, and democracy is left behind in the dust” (p. 3).

However, Marcuse (2000) claimed, “ [if] states do not control the movement of capital or goods, it is not that they cannot but because they will not—it is an abdication of state power, not a lack of power” (p. 25). McMurtry (1998) confidently declared, "...free trade frees corporations and investment capital from the limits of democratic process" (p. 268) wherein lies one of the most serious problems that we, as a global society, face today.

McMurtry (1998) stated,

...in the moral vision of this advanced stage of the global market, the state's overriding purpose is to ensure that no social, political, or environmental impediment blocks 'the free circulation of capital and goods'. This is the new and universal norm for world civil society, a norm portrayed to all alike as 'freedom'....The global market system is a more totalized regime of prescribing how to live than any in history....There is no domain or level of existence over which the doctrine does not claim rightful authority....Any opposition to this [money-profit] rule is perceived as heresy and condemned as a threat to freedom. (p. 279)

In most countries, the public sector has been responsible for providing K-12 education. But in the U.S. today, the corporatization of education is growing rapidly because the education system is recognized as a captive and lucrative market. According to Birkett (2000), the charter school movement had grown from one U.S. state in 1991 to 33 states in 1998 with 3000 charter schools expected by 2001, 200 of which will be operated by for-profit educational institutions. In Canada, there were 10 charter schools, all of which were situated in Alberta (Bosetti et al., 2000).

What's at Stake for Education

Services are part of the “built-in” agenda for the World Trade Organization (WTO), as corporations want further global expansion. Both the U.S. and the European Union want to drastically increase the impact of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) by having it apply to all services, including health and education (Clarke, n.d.; Shrybman, 1999; Wallach & Sforza, 1999). Possible results would be for-profit hospitals and universities, charter schools, and voucher systems operating in Canada. Sinclair (2000) and Clarke (n.d.) alleged that the Canadian federal government is a willing participant in this attempt to privatize educational services when it should be seeking exemptions for this critical sector.

If Canada negotiates to have education services covered by the WTO's GATS, the following are five potential impacts (Sinclair, 2000). Firstly, foreign, for-profit education institutions would be allowed to set up in Canada. The GATS guarantees investment rights to foreign corporations, including private schools and universities. Secondly, no requirements could be made of foreign corporations to hire locally or have local participation on boards of governors. No residency requirements or preferences would be allowed. Thirdly, educational services could be delivered through any method possible. In addition to being guaranteed the right to establish a commercial presence in foreign countries, corporations would be allowed to deliver courses across borders through the Internet, send in their own educational professionals and workers into other countries, and have foreign students take courses at their institutions. Fourthly, changes would be made in licensing standards. Requirements of education professions and institutions could be reviewed by the WTO to ensure compliance to Article VI, 4 of GATS that states, “Governments have to ensure that their licensing requirements both for facilities and for services are not more burdensome than necessary to achieve the quality of the services”. As

well, according to one report, governments would have to give degree-granting authority to foreign educational service providers and ensure that non-governmental bodies exercising delegated governmental authority (such as teachers colleges or professional organizations) recognize degrees and diplomas granted by foreign educational service providers, including for-profit foreign providers. Lastly, government subsidies of any kind, including student loans, could have to be given out on a “non-discriminatory” basis to public and private education providers. For example, the WTO Secretariat questions whether transportation passes do not have to be granted to students of foreign-owned universities if they are given to students attending domestic institutions.

While present negotiations are apparently focusing on liberalizing higher education, the GATS has a clause that requires countries to make more and more commitments over time; thus, primary and secondary education may be targeted next (Clarke, n.d.; Sinclair, 2000). As well, if Canada commits the entire education sector to coverage by GATS, primary and secondary schools could find they have to compete on an equal footing with private or charter schools and voucher systems for government support. "In a profit-driven system, there is simply no economic need for the kinds of educational qualities educators themselves typically champion: equality of claims on educational resources, open college admission, importance of minority teachers, and so on" (Smith, 1999, p. 100).

Calvert and Kuehn (1993) maintained harmonization in education would have the following effects: “pressure to decrease the level of funding to education; reduction in social programs that improve the quality of life for children; demands to limit bargaining rights of teachers; and pressure to open delivery of education services to privatization and ‘market solutions’” (p. 90). According to Barlow and Robertson (1994), North America's corporate

leaders had three fundamental goals in the take-over of public education. The first was "to secure the ideological allegiance of young people to a free-market world view on issues of the environment, corporate rights, and the role of government" (p. 79). The second was "to gain market access to the hearts and minds of young consumers and to lucrative contracts in the education industry" (p. 79). The third was "to transform schools into training centres producing a workforce suited to the needs of transnational corporations" (p. 79). These goals were to be accomplished by claiming public education was not fulfilling its mandate to ensure citizens were prepared for the new globalized world economy, offering a marketplace philosophy as the authentic Messiah for education, and contributing to dismantling public education through proposing "choice" as the effective educational alternative (Smith, 1999). He further argued that this phenomenon would decrease the chances for young people to meaningfully engage with people different from their culture, class, and race. He succinctly stated,

...clearly, the traditional venues for educational practice, the public school and public university, are not just under siege by corporate colonialism; their very justification is being eroded as demands are made increasingly to make those institutions accountable to market forces. The traditional aims of liberal democratic education to produce national citizens well grounded rounded in the arts of tolerance and understanding are giving way to various forms of Social Darwinism that valorize winning at all costs, even at the cost of seeing one's own brothers and sisters falling by the wayside of global competitiveness. (p. 109)

If humans, through education and training, did not become resources, public education must be revamped for this purpose, or not be funded because it was unaccountable. The irony was that the educational future of our children must be held accountable to the market which, apparently,

is not held accountable for anything (McMurtry, 1998).

McMurtry (1991) was clear in his resolve,

...[e]ducation is being made to become its opposite by what might be called ‘the totalitarian moment’ of the capitalist marketplace in its period of greatest triumph and global pervasion, a moment that is ironically celebrated as a ‘victory of freedom’ for all. What is required to keep the commodity market in its proper place and to prevent the inversion of education under its demand, is first of all the recognition that they are systematically opposed and not, as we have so far mutely accepted, related as end to means. (p. 43)

Woodhouse (1991) concurred when he concluded, “[s]ince the logic of education and the logic of the market conflict with each other, it is irrational to try to bring them together in a process of assimilation”....[in fact] the market model is indeed anti-educational” (p. 50). Charter schools in the U.S. and Alberta are a result of a much larger movement to commodify everything, including services, and to sell them to the highest bidder.

The Libertarian View and Charter Schools

What follows is the libertarian argument for privatizing and deregulating educational services. Coupled with this argument is the perception of some that public education was in crisis and must be marketized because competition was the only reform that would improve its delivery. The reasons for this crisis are presented below. Before dealing with arguments in favour of school choice, attention is paid to the concepts of deregulation and privatization, the reasons they are being considered, and their advantages.

The Libertarian Argument

As part of the macro level controversy, Bellah (1998) stated that libertarianism was based

on “ontological individualism” which is the belief that truth is found in our isolated selves rather than through society and relations with others. Furthermore, according to Bellah (1998), libertarians envisioned a society based on a social contract establishing procedures of fairness which left individuals free to serve their own interests. Ayn Rand, (as cited in Sommers & Sommers, 1997), professed that “to redeem both man [sic] and morality, it is the concept of ‘selfishness’ that one has to redeem” (p. 495). Libertarianism was preoccupied with rights, which were not meaningful if they were overruled by collective goals and interests, because it was a philosophy of liberation and not one of belonging (Selznick, 1992). No societal task should be compulsory for all members who must be free to question their participation in existing social practices and opt out if they so chose (Kymlicka, 1990). No communal ends should be authoritatively enforced because “collectivist ends can be attained without a collectivist means” (Friedman, 1970, p. 131). The role of the state in a libertarian world is to protect the rights of individuals and not to concern itself with regulating the lives of citizens (Etzioni, 1993). A strong belief existed that public services should be privatized, private business deregulated, and taxes reduced with individuals responsible for purchasing their own services. Milton Friedman (1997), a strong proponent of libertarianism, stated,

...economic arrangements play a dual role in the promotion of a free society. On the one hand, freedom in economic arrangements is itself a component of a freedom broadly understood, so economic freedom is an end in itself. In the second place, economic freedom is also an indispensable means toward the achievement of political freedom. (p. 293)

As part of this macro level debate, the concepts of deregulation and privatization must be understood because they were being touted, by libertarians, as being superior instruments for the

delivery of services.

Deregulation and Privatization

When discussing charter schools, the concepts of deregulation and privatization must be included. This section attempts to deal with these topics in a general sense by reporting from the literature the reasons for and advantages of them. According to Roman (1990), the words regulation, deregulation, competition, and privatization elicited feelings of support or disapproval to the listener: “Although widespread in their adoption, privatization and deregulation are somewhat elusive concepts, supported by varying motives” (p. x). Privatization had gained worldwide support from governments of all political persuasions, Hodge (2000) maintained, because it promised to improve upon shabby and sluggish state-owned enterprises. He also stated that privatization was a worldwide phenomenon which had frequently been accepted with considerable fanfare. Many election proclamations had privatization as a primary plank.

Hodge (2000) claimed privatization was simply a device being utilized to pursue a range of goals and was driven by political objectives. Those who supported privatization asserted that the private sector could perform better than the public sector because public bureaucracies were inclined to failure (Gormley, 1991). Starr (1991) wrote that the most devoted supporters of privatization were those who were hostile to many of the reasons for public services. He contended that it was merely a strategy to reconstruct the liberal democratic state and that “its advocates want us to think about government as irredeemably incompetent, to empty out the portfolio of public responsibilities, and to avoid entertaining any new ideas about affirmative uses of public authority” (p. 35). Beesley (1997) contended that privatization in the UK was politically motivated with the goal being to reduce the power of the state.

According to Hodge (2000), Drucker coined the phrase reprivatize in the late 1960s because “the best we get from government in the welfare state is competent mediocrity”, and incompetence at worst. Drucker also thought that governments’ strength lie in making decisions, not executing them, and that they should return as many activities as possible to the private sector. “In the words of Professors Bishop and Kay from the United Kingdom, ‘privatization... was a shift from concern for market failure to concern for regulatory failure’” (Hodge, 2000, p. 6). He maintained that the breakdown of centrally planned economies had fueled the privatization fire. Its emergence in the United Kingdom had been due to failures in industrial relations policies resulting in excessive public sector union power, and a high ratio between public investment and borrowing.

Reasons for Deregulation and Privatization

Stewart (1998) stated that what citizens called “protection” proponents of deregulation called “red tape”. He noted, “What is officious government interference to some is, to the nation at large...often the only defense we have against public disaster” (p. 110). He asserted that instead of impartial regulation we now had “self-regulation”, which was an oxymoron meaning “anything goes”.

There are many reasons for privatization. These include: ideological (Butler, 1991; Hodge, 2000; Pack, 1991; Starr, 1991; Stewart, 1998), superior private sector efficiency (Beesley & Littlechild, 1997; Butler, 1991; Gormley, 1991; Greider, 1997; Hodge, 2000; Osborne & Plastrik, 1997; Pack, 1991; Starr, 1991; Yarrow, 1986), increased competition (Beesley & Littlechild, 1997; Hodge, 2000; Roman, 1990), and union elimination (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Ideological. Hodge (2000) contended that “the context of privatization is inherently ideological” and that “the objectives of privatization...are intimately bound up with the political,

social, and economic agenda of government” (p. 17) and its role in society. Conservatives assured citizens that they were only concerned with cost effectiveness and eliminating hidden subsidies to those who did not deserve to be supported (Starr, 1991). Also, Pack (1991) asserted, proponents dwelled on government failures.

Private versus public sector efficiency. Increasing economic efficiency should be the main aim of privatization, according to Yarrow (1986), and should be determined by whether or not there were positive net benefits to consumers (Beesely & Littlechild, 1997). This belief, not careful exploration and assessment, had been the “privatization lubricant” (Hodge, 2000, p. 9). He further declared that competence and desirability of public provision was called into question as well as the state’s capability of and necessity for universally provided services. Butler (1991) added to this argument by stating that some proponents of privatization felt that the private sector might be in a better position to attain governmental goals previously attempted by public policies.

Starr (1991) argued that the message put forth by proponents of privatization was that government normally blundered, and the solution was to turn to the private sector rather than to attempt to correct deficiencies in the public sector. After all, proponents further contended, “we are uniformly better off when we turn away from politics and exercise choices as consumers rather than as citizens” (p. 26). Governments had opted for privatization “in an effort to reduce burdens on the public purse, maximize consumer choice, and promote other goals” (Gormley, 1991, p. 3). Osborne and Plastrik (1991) declared that in Britain the conclusion was reached that government was not an efficient owner of business; that government ownership could lead to additional spending; and that economic and social policies, not commercial initiatives, should concern legislators. Led by the Christian Right advocates argued that nearly all public functions

could be privatized including schools, health care, and charity (Greider, 1997). This would lead to reduced taxation thereby freeing people to spend their money as they wished and liberating them from any public responsibilities.

Increased competition. According to Beesley and Littlechild (1997), the fundamental purpose of privatization was to increase private industry attainment by broadening the role of market forces. They contended that to achieve this competition must be promoted and attained.

Advantages of Deregulation and Privatization

Like most other phenomena there are both benefits and drawbacks accruing from privatization (Ingstrup & Crookall, 1998). Both sides ardently argued their positions but research on the topic has been mixed. “More recent meta-research is teasing out that privatization is successful under some conditions...such as garbage collection and cleaning and maintenance... yet ineffective in others...[such as] in policy matters and services where there are competing priorities” (p. 201). Gormley (1991) held that supporters viewed privatization as leading to an efficient public sector relying on the marketplace for the provision of services. At its best, privatization could curtail the expenses of government by reducing the size of government (Smith, 1990) and by introducing new possibilities for better service delivery. Because profit making would become the ultimate goal, Beesley (1997) contended that a larger pool of managerial talent would be available. Since competition rather than monopoly was supposed to prevail, benefits to consumers were probably going to increase (Beesley & Littlechild, 1997). Gormley (1991) argued that forms of privatization that empower consumers and poor people and reduce the power of bureaucrats were difficult to regard as a threat to democratic government.

School choice, the micro level controversy, was meant to transform the administration of

education from a government to a market system (Friedman, 1970). He offered an argument for privatizing education and maintained that privatizing education would “produce a new, highly active and profitable private industry that would offer a real opportunity to talented people now deterred from entering the teaching profession” (p. 44) because of the perceived appalling condition of the majority of schools.

Deregulation of Education and Privatization of Schools

Libertarians viewed competition and marketplace ideology as the keys to school reform (Boaz, 1997; Friedman, 1997; Kymlicka, 1990). Chubb and Moe (1990), in their book *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, asserted that public schools, owing to their bureaucratic nature, provided inadequate instruction because they lacked the autonomy necessary to create effective education. Thus, they claimed that the way to create effective schools was to substitute the market for democratic politics.

Supporters and advocates for such a system pointed to the bureaucratic hierarchy involved in public education and the vast amount of tax dollars wasted in paying the salaries of those involved in this educational bureaucracy. Charter schools would, supposedly, eliminate this bureaucracy and place school choice in the hands of the parents. Proponents stated,

...public services must be delivered in such a way that the 'purchaser'—the government—must be separate and different from the 'provider'...[G]overnments should not both pay for, and administer services such as education...[because they] cannot be trusted to defend the public interest as they are 'vested interests' themselves. (Dobbin, 1997, pp. 51-52)

Deregulated charter schools promised to remove the government from its involvement in education as much as possible, and to place the responsibility for education onto those more

directly involved—namely parents.

It was felt that charter schools were a way of injecting competition into school systems. The theory followed that schools would have strong incentives to do things that would attract students from, or lose them to, competitors that would mean a direct gain or loss of funds. It was assumed that the market would create quality education for everyone through the mechanism of choice.

Shortcomings of Public Education

The concerns some people had with the public education system added fuel to the micro debate on educational delivery. Underskilled graduating students, progressive child-centred education, unacceptable imparted values, and the large and powerful education bureaucracy were some of the shortcomings mentioned by education writers. “North America’s educational system has fallen from grace” (Nikiforuk, 1993, p. xi) as confidence in public education was declining (Guppy & Davies, 1999). Lawton (1995) supported this view by stating that the legitimacy of the system was in doubt due to its lack of effectiveness and efficiency “particularly as we move into what is seen to be a more dangerous and competitive world” (p. 31). The fact that there was an increasing search for alternatives to public education by a growing number of parent and teacher reform groups indicated public dissatisfaction with the present system. Guppy and Davies (1999) argued that “education has not kept pace...with the rising expectations of an ever-more-educated population” (p. 272). However, the level of schooling made a significant difference as the most educated were less confident in public schooling. Emberley and Newell (1994) contended, “this crisis is the decline of liberal education in Canada under a lethal combination of pressures from the left and right, and—more strangely—from a convergence between their goals” (p. 9).

Chubb and Moe (1990) maintained that public schools were constrained by bureaucracy and, therefore, incapable of addressing the needs and desires of parents and students. They wrote,

...[u]nder a system of democratic control, the public schools are governed by an enormous, far-flung constituency in which the interest of parents and students carry no special status....Their [public schools] agendas are set by politicians, administrators and the various democratic constituencies that hold the keys to political power....Bureaucracy arises naturally and inevitably out of these efforts at democratic control. (pp. 35, 38)

They also claimed that due to its structure, the success of public education was almost an unnatural phenomenon in part because it “has become addicted to growth and all its trappings” (Nikiforuk, 1993, p. 53).

Lawton (1995) asserted that recent criticisms of public education included high drop-out rates, students exiting school with insufficient literacy and numeracy skills, and growing violence in the schools. Wilkinson (1994) supported the claim of high dropout levels by noting “about anywhere from one-fifth to one-third of those entering high school” (p. 19) dropped out. He also pointed out the considerable costs to the economy of dropouts.

Underskilled Students

There was a collapse of public confidence in education mainly due to a substandard quality of schooling (Emberley & Newell, 1994; Nikiforuk, 1993). Many parents were concerned that young graduates were academically performing inadequately (Wilkinson, 1994). Parents were dissatisfied with the environment provided by the school system because it was not conducive to their children receiving the education the parents wanted (Lawton, 1995) who further contended that illiteracy and innumeracy were considered by the public to indicate the

lack of success of the expensive educational system. Wilkinson (1994) held that employers were disgruntled by the incompetent people they were employing. Some parents feared that their children were leaving school ill prepared to meet challenges that awaited them (Emberley & Newell, 1994) including insufficient preparation in high school for post secondary education.

Displeasure with the quality of schooling, usually raised in relation to Canada's international competitiveness, was comprised, in part, by the kinds of course offerings, course contents, and methods of teaching these courses, as well as grading and promotional procedures (Wilkinson, 1994). He maintained that of particular concern were the teaching of spelling, the spiral approach to mathematics, the science curriculum, second-language teaching, and various child-centred approaches. The outcry for curriculum reform (Emberley & Newell, 1994) had arisen from business, ethnic advocacy groups, some educators, radical intellectuals at universities and colleges, and "back-to-the-basics" religious advocates.

Critiques of Progressive Education

Nikiforuk (1993) claimed that progressive education failed to fulfill the expectation of education, which was to expand the intellect and to bring to life the imagination. He wrote:

...I have witnessed the progressive or modern school as a lacklustre place where getting by for the moment is the minimum virtue demanded of pupils and teachers. Such poverty of purpose makes a public school system vulnerable to attack, if not dismemberment. No community and no nation can finance aimlessness in the classroom without losing soul and heart. Yet many schools now present this very danger to our communities. (p. xiv)

He argued that progressivism had over time transformed the school from a conventional space for learning and teaching into a disordered centre for child care, social engineering, and "meaningful" activities, with the curriculum often stemming "from the children's own whims"

(p. 22). He maintained that school texts were simplified to the point that the overuse of pictures in modern-day readers actually served to undermine the process of reading, and coincided with fallen literacy levels.

This decline in literacy levels, he contended, flagged the critical battle between progressive thinking, which relied on image and intuition, and traditional thinking, which involved disciplined thought with word. Furthermore, he deplored how writing,

...has become just another playful activity that more closely resembles masturbation than the thoughtful application of language in a complex or extended fashion....The natural approach may increase fluency, but it is largely a recipe for graduating self-centred scribblers who misspell much of what they may have discovered. (p. 38)

Emberley and Newell (1994) insisted that the practice of destreaming in Canadian schools had resulted in a new watered down curriculum which was extremely undemocratic and patronizing. It treated all public school students as potential service economy employees not deserving of a serious education in the sciences and humanities. Nikiforuk (1993) also criticized progressive education for turning public schooling “into an electronic and narcissistic industry where ends are eternally confused with beginnings. In the modern classroom, information poses as knowledge, images as ideas, attention as concentration, activities as continuity, and emotion as truth....The result [of which] is neither democratic nor socially desirable” (pp. 48,49).

Child-centred, process-oriented education was initially justified on the grounds that it would contribute to a better-trained and more competitive workforce, and had had sufficient time to prove itself (Emberley & Newell, 1994). However, they maintained the period of its growing influence coincided with the reported deterioration in learning and literacy among Canadian students. Finally, Nikofooruk (1993) claimed that recent high school graduates were shocked to

discover that they were insufficiently prepared for life. However, he maintained that “they have been victims of a conspiracy to shield them from any knowledge of their inadequacies” (p. 46) until it was too late to correct them.

Imparted Values

According to Bauman (1996), “philosophers and education theorists since Plato have known that education is a moral and value-laden enterprise” (p. 84). However, many parents were concerned about questionable values being conveyed in the schools (Wilkinson, 1994). Emberley and Newell (1994) held that parents were concerned that schools were not morally preparing children for a worthwhile existence. According to Lawton (1995), there was no guarantee that children were not being taught values and beliefs with which parents disagreed because public schools attempted to satisfy everyone. “Schools, which once imparted local values, are now places where children learn to become strangers in a strange land” (Nikiforuk (1993, p. 53).

There were two main areas of public displeasure regarding the values being conveyed or not being conveyed in the public system. One dealt with basic moral-ethical questions. The second was associated with how religion and culture in public schools were addressed (Wilkinson, 1994). He alleged that students were taught, much to the displeasure of many parents, that there were “no moral-ethical absolutes and no child’s views are wrong. Diverse opinions are to be encouraged. Moral relativism often holds sway” (p. 23). He further maintained that because schools taught secular humanism parents saw schools as working against the values and philosophy of life that children were taught at home and in church, in particular in the areas of attitude to work, coworkers, and family.

Problems With Bureaucracy

Education bureaucracies had become too powerful and were not effectively serving the purpose for which they were intended (Bauman, 1996; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Guppy & Davies, 1999; Lawton, 1995; Nikiforuk, 1993). Three problems associated with unwieldy and unresponsive bureaucracies were ineffective communication, excessively dominant teachers' unions, and democracy.

Lack of communication. Bauman (1996) blamed ineffective governance dialogue on the incorrect belief in the political neutrality of education and the epidemic suspicion about government and politics. Nikoforuk (1993) contended that one cause of poor communication was that education administrators sent home multiple-choice forms for parents to complete and return instead of initiating public forums that encouraged debate and discussion. Ineffective communication approaches, mainly in inner-city neighborhoods, impeded education decision-makers from getting full information from all constituents (Bauman, 1996). Finally, he stated that this crucial issue was one of the reasons for the public's loss of confidence in public education. Birkett (2000) maintained that the unwillingness on the part of educators to engage in meaningful discussions about education, which could lead to genuine partnerships, was one of the reasons why a growing number of parents would like to withdraw their children from public schools in the U.S.

Ineffective nature of democracy. In the opinion of Chubb and Moe (1990), the main problem was the coercive and imperfect nature of democracy. They argued that "the winners get to use public authority to impose their policies on the losers...[and] the 'losers' have the obligation to accept and help finance these policies and structures, however much they may be

opposed to them” (p. 28). Wilkinson (1994) espoused a similar view on the weakness of democracy when he wrote,

...[if] the system is being almost totally controlled by the bureaucracy [which has its own well being and perpetuation at heart], and manipulated as necessary in accord with their views of educational philosophy and methodology, rather than being responsive to public wishes, then a question must be raised about the effectiveness of elected representatives in reflecting the views of the public and hence about the effectiveness of the democratic system itself....What is occurring really does not square with the concept of democracy as most people comprehend it. (p. 27)

Chubb and Moe (1990) contended that for public schools to become significantly more effective, the institutions that controlled them needed to be reformed to actively advocate and sustain the kinds of schools people wanted. They admitted that public schools, with the right governing institutions, were capable of being as effective as market-driven schools because public-private differences were not the problem.

Proponent Arguments in Favour of School Choice

What follows is an examination of the advantages of school choice as put forth by proponents as part of the micro level debate. Although school choice comes in many forms, this section only addresses charter schools and characteristics common to all forms of school choice. Detailed arguments, classified as internal and external claims, are reported as espoused by supporters of school choice.

Nathan (1999) asserted that the notion of charter schools in the U.S. was viewed as an opportunity to make a difference, not as a blueprint. He described them as public non-sectarian schools that operated under a written contract, or charter, from an authorizing organization such

as a local school board, and were open to all students. Since the movement was driven by people who wished to improve student achievement, contracts specified how the school would be held accountable for such growth. For this promise, charter schools were not held to most rules and regulations that governed public schools. Whether or not charter schools' contracts were renewed was dependent upon improved student achievement. Nathan (1999) contended that the concept of charter schools represented the American principles and values of responsibility, opportunity, choice, freedom, and accountability. However, others questioned whether or not all charter schools are non-sectarian and are open to all students (Dobbin, 1997). For the purpose of this study, charter schools were defined as schools operating under a written contract, or charter, from a local school board or some other organization such as a state or provincial government. These contracts stipulated how the school would be held accountable for improved student improvement, in exchange for being immune from rules and regulations that applied to publicly funded and governed schools including compulsory membership by teachers in a union. This holds true for both U.S. and Alberta charter schools.

Charter schools, Lawton (1995) argued, "[were] based on the notion that public choice, not bureaucratic or political authority, should be the dominant paradigm for providing public service" (p. 69). They were about decentralization in Alberta (Bosetti et al., 2000) because parents, teachers, and community representatives should have the power and authority to develop meaningful school designs. In their opinion, these individuals should be held accountable to raise academic standards. According to them, through this process educators would be empowered.

The charter school approach in the United States gave birth to entrepreneurial opportunity thereby introducing healthy competition into the public education system for the sake of improvement (Nathan, 1999). Alberta charter schools, Bosetti et al. (2000) claimed,

...are intended to be a mechanism for revitalizing public education, rather than a viable form of public education in and of themselves. They were created to be 'test sites' for innovative practices in teaching and learning, with the intent that successful practices would eventually be incorporated within local public schools as alternative programs. (p. 160)

There was a role for government (Lawton, 1995). It would ensure that the common good was reflected in a school's charter in addition to the group's or community's particularistic values and objectives. Democratic governance and individual rights, he argued, were important values that needed to be addressed. This notion of government involvement was supported by Mitchell, Sackney, and Walker (1996) when they declared that "some form of structural arrangement will continue to be needed" (p. 56) in the wake of growing decentralization.

This notion of charter schools in the United States was considerably unlike the proposals for vouchers (Nathan, 1999). He held that charter schools had to be non-sectarian, choose students randomly, not charge students tuition beyond what the state provided, and demonstrate and document improved student achievement. There were those who stated that school choice would improve education (Chubb & Moe, 1990, 1995; Nathan, 1999).

Internal Effects

It was contended that school choice, in the form of charter schools, would have the following positive internal effects: improve student achievement (Chubb & Moe, 1990, 1995; Nathan, 1999), increase accountability (Chubb & Moe, 1990, 1995; Moe, 2001; Nathan, 1999),

enable poor people to obtain a good education for their children (Nathan, 1999; Wilkinson, 1994), be more efficient (Bauman, 1996; Wilkinson, 1994), and improve education through autonomy and competition (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hill, 2000; Nathan, 1999).

Improve student achievement. Nathan (1999) claimed that there was ample and growing evidence that charter schools could, in fact, improve student achievement. He cited the study conducted by Cheung, Murphy, and Nathan (1998) that examined student achievement in 31 charter schools in 10 states and found that 21 of the charter schools exhibited improvements, “measured in many ways including standardized tests” (p. xvii), in student achievement. Students from one charter school in Massachusetts and one in Georgia made more than one year’s gain for each year they attended. In Pueblo Colorado’s School for the Arts and Science 91% of the students with at least two years of attendance “made ‘highly significant improvement’ in Science, and 57 percent made ‘highly significant improvement’ or ‘significant improvement’ in language arts” (Nathan, 1999, pp. xvii-xviii).

Increase accountability. External forms of accountability were unnecessary, argued Chubb and Moe (1990, 1995) and Nathan (1999), because unhappy parents would vote with their feet and their pocketbooks, making schools directly accountable. Garn and Cobb (2001) wrote of three types of accountability: market, bureaucratic, and performance. They argued that alone none of them were capable of keeping charter schools accountable. Market accountability might not effectively detect mismanaged or underperforming schools; bureaucratic accountability might stifle innovations; and performance accountability might compel charter schools to “teach to the test”. They concluded, “states that blend multiple models of accountability better inform all constituents—including parents and taxpayers—about the performance of publicly funded schools. This, we believe, can be done without sacrificing autonomy and innovation” (p. 127).

Provide a good education for poor children. Nathan (1999) maintained that minority students were over represented in American charter schools. Also, he stated that the focus of more than half of all of these schools was on students who had not met success in public schools. This information, he suggested, was proof that charter schools were not elitist but rather were catering to the betterment of low-income and minority students. Nathan (1999) continued by arguing that, once again, critics were insisting that many of these families were incapable of making wise decisions when it came to selecting effective schools. "This is not the first time that those in opposition to new policies have argued that certain groups do not know how to make good decisions. The same argument was used against women's suffrage and against civil rights" (p. 179). Wilkinson (1994) claimed that research supported the view that poor or less educated parents cared about their children's schooling and were more than capable of sound educational decision making.

Proponents of school choice claimed that it would bring about significant improvements in social equity for the disadvantaged, who were trapped in the worst schools in the country and were most desperately in need of choice (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Moe, 2001; Wilkinson, 1994). Wilkinson (1994) maintained that presently, only people who could afford to purchase homes near schools of reputed excellence were allowed to attend these schools. Furthermore, he held that school choice would permit all families, regardless of socioeconomic status, to enjoy the freedom to choose: "Permitting minorities to have their own distinct school programs and cultural-religious emphases could produce in these minorities an appreciation of other minorities" (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 61). He further alleged that studies (Erickson, Macdonald, & Manley-Casimir, 1979; Greeley, McCready, & McCourt, 1976; Johnstone, 1966) showed that students who had attended independent schools were more tolerant of and less prejudiced against

minorities than those who had attended public schools. He continued by claiming that “little justification exists for the common connection that only tightly controlled public schools can, and will, produce the appropriate social values that our society requires for its harmonious continuation” (p. 62).

Be more efficient. According to Bauman (1996), greater competition in education would likely keep costs down. In fact, Wilkinson (1994) stated that empirical evidence indicated that the total costs of education, if supplied privately as opposed to publicly, as well as the cost per graduating student, would be lessened in spite of increased quality and parental satisfaction. He further contended, that even if it turned out not to be cheaper, some would consider the expanded choice to be worth the additional expense.

Improve education through increased autonomy and competition. Americans are pragmatic people who do not trust monopolies because they have found they often take customers for granted (Nathan, 1999). Like most monopolies, the public school system was frequently unnecessarily bureaucratic and failed to respond to its constituents. Freedman (1995), consequently, insisted that the present public education monopoly must be opened to fresh dynamics. Nathan (1999) put forward the notion of charter schools to remove the present “exclusive franchise” currently enjoyed by school boards because he contended competition would help to bring about improvements in public education. Similar views were held by people in Alberta who demanded charter schools.

There had been the astonishing expansion of education bureaucracies (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Nathan, 1999) which revealed the fact that “public schools are not really ‘locally controlled’ and are not supposed to be. The authority exercised by local governments is delegated to them by the states and can be modified or revoked at the states’ pleasure” (Chubb &

Moe, 1990, p. 31). They claimed that discretion and autonomy were not even considered, and bureaucratizing schools was the best strategy for public authorities to impose higher-order values on schools. “The dangers of political subversion are...vastly reduced, because there is little or no discretion left to subvert” (p. 43). Guppy and Davies (1999) contended that educational institutions were increasingly considered to be huge, unwieldy, and inadequate. Bauman (1996) concurred when he argued,

...there are inefficiencies inherent in a system of multiple layers of governmental responsibility and political authority....The long-term consequence of intergovernmentalism is a system with so many levels of government that all are nominally responsible for education, yet none are truly responsible....Overlapping governance demands on school principals create a sense of uncertainty and contradiction. (pp. 163-164)

Lawton (1995) accused education bureaucracies of “provider capture” which he described as the tendency of public agencies “to serve the interests of their own members rather than those of the public” (p. 34). This position was supported by Wilkinson (1994) who asserted that frequently those in power who opposed school choice wished to make sure that they were indispensable, and were unwilling to see their jobs become redundant. “Powerful administrators have steadily drifted into behaviours favouring what is best for them, and often not what is best for children” (Freedman, 1995, p. 140).

In their study of American schools, Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1982) concluded that private schools educated typical students better than public schools because of differences in school organization. This large-scale study was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and looked at high school seniors and sophomores enrolled in public and private institutions.

The study addressed two basis questions. One question posed was how much private schools contributed to segregation by race and class. The other question addressed the difference between public and private schools in the achievement of basic skills as measured by standardized tests. Chubb and Moe (1990) claimed that they could prove empirically that “private schools are organized more effectively than public schools are and that this is a reflection of their far greater autonomy from external [bureaucratic] control” (p. 24). Urban schools, according to them, had incredibly powerful forces at work that nourished bureaucratic authority over them. Students attending these large heterogeneous schools were often times difficult to handle and had parents who did not support their efforts. However, these authors contended that autonomy was imperative for effective school organization regardless of the types of students and parents being served by the organization or its location. Nathan (1999) concurred with Chubb and Moe (1990) when he maintained that some of public education’s woes were caused by the bureaucracy composed of unions, school boards, administrators, and legislators, and not necessarily from the difficulties students brought to school with them. Chubb and Moe (1990) admitted that public schools, that educated able students with supportive parents, were capable of experiencing the autonomy private schools took for granted.

The public system discouraged progress and risk taking in spite of the fact that there were many committed and talented teachers (Nathan, 1999). He asserted that the system, because of the bitterness caused by bureaucratic in-fighting, often frustrated creative teachers and concerned parents. Wilkinson (1994) maintained that parents and students were as a rule not as organized as the educational bureaucracy which caused a power imbalance. According to Lawton (1995), education bureaucracy actually interfered with educating children, and was extremely unwilling, perhaps even incapable, of determining and dealing with its own deficiencies. Wilkinson (1994)

firmly believed that those mostly affected by a decision should be the ones with the authority to make the decision. He calls this the principle of subsidiarity which is,

...the tenet that decision making should be delegated to the smallest, most intimate groups of people possible, rather than being left with some strong centralized authority... subsidiarity is consistent with basic freedom and self-determination for people generally. It is founded as well on the precept that individuals matter, that they are important, that they deserve to be heard and are capable of making sound decisions affecting themselves and their families' well-being. (p. 50)

Democracy did not serve individuals well (Chubb & Moe, 1990). They maintained that it was a myth that schools were what parents and students wanted them to be and that this corresponded with the other misleading myth of local control: "The schools are agencies of society as a whole, and everyone has a right to participate too. But they have no right to win. In the end, they have to take what society gives them" (p. 32). According to Chubb and Moe (1990), it was possible for any special interest group, by gaining adequate support, to dictate public policy for all constituents. This resulted in an eternal skirmish for public control which, they admitted, was important for market-driven institutions but did not influence decisionmaking to the same extent. They also argued that democratic political power tended to naturally constrain and weaken school autonomy. They insisted that bureaucratizing education had served to insulate "schools from the insidious influences of their political enemies: the party machines, the lower classes, ethnic groups, immigrants" (p. 46). Finally, they concluded that democratic authority was completely incongruous with the autonomous performance and effective organization of schools.

Chubb and Moe (1990) contended that unions got in the way of effective schools. They maintained that “unions will operate at a serious disadvantage in a market setting” (p. 53) because decision makers in the private sector would not look favourably upon worker protection or collective bargaining. There were times that collective agreements seemed to discourage teachers and parents who were committed to improving the education system (Nathan, 1999). He argued that agreements stood in the way of rewarding teachers for student progress and disciplining teachers whose students exhibited insufficient progress. Also, he claimed, negotiated salary structures did not take into consideration the quality of a teacher’s performance and, therefore, were unable to reward teachers for exceptional work. He alleged that in addition, teachers were frustrated by the fact that it was next to impossible to eliminate mediocre teachers from the public school system. Nathan (1999) suggested that it might be that unions’ concerns about their own futures, higher salaries, and fewer hours of work were the major reasons teachers were opposed to deregulated choice programs. Therefore, it was crucial that charter schools be allowed to create their own working conditions and not be bound by local collective agreements. Wilkinson (1994) confirmed the fears of the restraints of collective agreements when he stated that private schools, at least in part, were more cost efficient than public schools because they were able to pay lower teacher salaries.

Collective bargaining between teachers and their public authorities led to the bureaucratization of personnel which disabled an organization by limiting its effectiveness and destining it to fail (Chubb & Moe, 1990). They alleged that,

...for the most part, the principal is stuck with the teachers the system gives him [sic].

They are stuck with him [sic]. And the teachers are stuck with one another....Public schools will lack the proper mix and balance of talents on which effective education

inherently depends....To make matters worse, principals are unlikely to be granted the formal tools of leadership that might allow them to create a team out of the motley crews the bureaucracy may give them. (pp. 50, 51)

Lawton (1995) argued that the main problem with unions was that “parents and communities have essentially no say as to who their children’s teachers are” (p. 17). Sawa (1995) suggested that teachers’ unions’ relationships with management must evolve from one that is adversarial to one of cooperation that puts the needs of children first, especially when it comes to incompetent teachers.

Although unions would be free to advance their causes (tenure, seniority rules) in the private sector, they would be less likely to garner “the assistance of politicians and administrators with political incentives” (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 173) because of union support at election time. These authors admitted that unionization in the private sector, because of accompanying competition, would be very difficult to sell.

External Effects

It was contended that the external effects brought about by the existence of charter schools were to increase diversity of schools (Nathan, 1999; Wilkinson, 1994) and to make public schools more responsive to parents’ wishes (Bauman, 1996; Hill, 2000; Nathan, 1999).

Increase diversity of schools. Some reformers insisted that private decisions would encourage a greater variety and differentiation among schools and their academic offerings (Bauman, 1996). According to Nathan (1999), school choice programs allowed schools to specialize and thus to effectively meet the needs of some students instead of to minimally address the needs of all students. Because consensus is elusive on what the common school should teach

young people, schools should be allowed to reflect diverse traditions, cultures, and beliefs so consistency exists between what is taught at home and at school (Wilkinson, 1994).

Cause public schools to be more responsive. Bauman (1996) and Wilkinson (1994) argued that greater competition in education, where parents were given a choice of schools for their children, would more than likely require public schools to react more closely to the needs and desires of their customers. Ineffective schools “would lose students and be faced with the need to improve their programs, teaching methods and learning environment, if they were to avoid having to close their doors. All schools would thereby be improved” (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 42).

The idea, in part, of charter school legislation in the U.S. and Alberta, was to encourage and to stimulate improvement in existing public schools and their districts thereby assisting the public education system to operate more effectively and efficiently (Bosetti et. al, 2000; Nathan, 1999). They contended that by allowing new schools to compete with existing schools public education delivery in the U.S. and Alberta would be changed.

In sum, proponents of charter schools claimed both internal and external benefits. Internally, they maintained that students would achieve more, charter schools would be held accountable because people would leave ineffective schools, children from poor families would receive a superior education, and charter schools would be more efficient and effective due to increased autonomy and competition. The external benefits accruing to the existence of charter schools, which will be the attributes under investigation, included increasing the diversity of schools to provide parents with a wider range of choices and forcing public schools to be more responsive to the needs of parents.

The Communitarian View and Charter Schools

The libertarian-communitarian debate, as was stated earlier, is the macro level controversy, continues by stating that communitarians consider the strengthening of communal goals superior to the granting of individual rights. A rebuttal to those who expound on the ills of public school education follows the reasons for and disadvantages of deregulation and privatization. This section concludes with the arguments expressed by opponents of unregulated school choice.

Communitarianism and Community Involvement

We live in a state of increasing moral confusion and social anarchy where we are deprived of clear leadership in most matters, especially moral matters (Etzioni, 1996). He argued that The Moral Authority raised the right questions but provided the wrong, largely authoritarian, dogmatic answers. This situation has caused communitarians to be concerned about the growth of rights and lessening of concern for civic duty (Etzioni, 1998). According to Kymlicka (1990), the debate is not over an individual's dependence on society but over society's dependence on the state.

Communitarian thinking "characterizes a good society as one that achieves balance between social order and autonomy" (Etzioni, 1996, p. 9). Etzioni further stated that communitarians envisioned a society that did not favor social good over individual choice or vice versa. Instead, communitarianism served the "two dual virtues in careful equilibrium" (p. 27) which required a heavy dependence, for supporting virtues, on education, leadership, encouragement, faith, and moral discussions, rather than the law. It also demanded determining a meaningful core of values that required promoting without imposing an overpowering ideology that left little room for autonomy. Kymlicka (1990) argued that allowing total self-determination

could become “an expression of indifference rather than concern” (p. 200). Also he stated that communitarians wondered whether democracy would prevail if individual rights were dominant over collective decisions. Etzioni (1993) maintained that the greatest danger of autonomy was the possibility of individuals feeling detached from society.

Etzioni (1993) held that there were what he called certain “Communitarian Truths”. For example, he felt that law and order could be restored without resorting to police states. As far as he was concerned the family could be saved without oppressing women. He argued that people were capable of living in communities where strong rights presumed strong responsibilities. Self-interest and commitment to the community could be balanced where “unbridled greed can be replaced by legitimate opportunities and socially constructive expression of self-interest” (p. 1). Also he thought that public interest could win out in the end without eliminating the right of people to lobby government. Shoring up the underpinnings of moral values, according to Etzioni, was crucial if we are to move toward a just and caring society.

Balance is a concern for communitarians: “balance between social forces and the person, community and autonomy, common good and liberty, individual rights and social responsibility” (Etzioni, 1998, p. x). Bellah (1998) professed the importance of citizen participation in society and the belief that such participation be viewed as both a right and a duty. He stated that it was imperative that those closest to a problem attend to it, calling on support from higher level groups if necessary. This call for support spelled out the “inevitability and necessity of the state” (p. 18). Communitarians were in favour of “relying first and foremost on attempts to persuade rather than coerce” (Etzioni, 1998, p. xiii) by searching for a moral consensus through open dialogue. They were criticized for being majoritarian but claimed to agree with a form of differentiation which would spell out areas in which the majority had no say so that minority

rights were protected (Etzioni, 1998). Communitarianism accepted both the value of the free market and the state and insisted that the function of them both was to serve people, not to dominate them (Bellah, 1998). Etzioni (1996) likened the communitarian movement to the environmental movement because it was dedicated to the betterment of our moral, social, and political environment. Their plans, which are to safeguard and enhance our future, are similar to those of environmentalists.

A good community accepts and encourages conflict over what constitutes shared values and goals, and consensus is challenged and changed sometimes radically and sometimes gradually (Bellah, 1998). The agenda for communitarians includes encouraging moral dialogue thereby reraising the moral voice. It also comprises determining how a society can save the moral and civil order of its communities from those who only wish to gain even more rights while not assuming additional responsibilities. Communitarians look critically at the political system and reenergize the public interest concurrently with analyzing how interest groups capture much of the national and local systems of government. Communitarians, who favor a democratic determination of a common good (Bellah, 1998; Etzioni, 1998, 1996, 1993; Kymlicka, 1990; Selznick, 1998), would prefer the strengthening of publicly financed and governed schools. Good societies permit room for local autonomy in their delivery of education (Etzioni, 1998). Unfortunately, according to McMurtry (1998), the libertarian argument was bolstered by calls for privatization and deregulation.

Deregulation and Privatization

The concepts of deregulation and privatization are also a part of the macro debate. Alternatives to deregulation and privatization for a more efficient and effective delivery of public services are addressed below. Richardson (1990) argued that although privatization and

deregulation might be prevalent “policy fashions”, there was by no means universal agreement on the desirability or execution of this fashion. Hodge (2000) warned of the lack of research on privatization when he wrote,

...a reason why a careful review of the effectiveness of privatization activities is a high priority is that there does not appear to have been, at least to date, a significant effort put into the development of a strong body of knowledge in this area....The driving force to date behind continued privatization activities appears to have been political ideology, rather than spectacular results from careful research and evaluation studies. (p. 9)

Furthermore, he alleged that little work had been undertaken to articulate the factors that led to strong public sector services.

The main goal for changing the regulatory status quo was to transfer wealth from others to the proponent (Roman, 1990). In other words, those who were promoting deregulation would demand regulation if it was to their advantage. Finn (2001) argued that the self-centred attitude of well-to-do business barons could be ignored, “if they were content to allow the less fortunate to be helped by our social programs. Instead, not needing basic social services themselves, they callously deny them to others” (p. 4) by dictating budget priorities to governments that cause social spending cuts, privatization of services, and user fees.

Reasons for Deregulation and Privatization

There are many reasons for privatization. These include ideological (Butler, 1991; Hodge, 2000; Pack, 1991; Starr, 1991; Stewart, 1998), superior private sector efficiency (Beesley & Littlechild, 1997; Butler, 1991; Gormley, 1991; Greider, 1997; Hodge, 2000; Osborne & Plastrik, 1997; Pack, 1991; Starr, 1991; Yarrow, 1986), increased competition (Beesley &

Littlechild, 1997; Hodge, 2000; Roman, 1990), private wealth gains (Herman, 2000; Hodge, 2000; Starr, 1991), and union elimination (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

Ideological. Hodge (2000) contended that what was most interesting was that privatization was considered successful by merely transferring a public company or service to the private sector. In other words, the goal was met by simply completing the privatization process itself thereby, according to Butler (1991), reducing the degree of government involvement in and influence over the lives of citizens and the economy.

As people accepted the propaganda that anything public was bad and anything private was good, argued Stewart (1998),

...they see the privatization craze, which has engulfed every level of government, as the working out of the public will. It is common sense. That is why the conversion of billions of dollars from public assets to private assets, which is the practical effect of many of the privatizations in Canada and around the world, has taken place against a background of thunderous applause but little study. (p. 254)

Pack (1991) argued that proponents trivialize market failures that led to public interventions in the first place. Furthermore, he offered that these backers conveniently overlooked the social gains associated with providing public services.

Private versus public sector efficiency. Pack (1991) held that public intervention came about due to “dissatisfaction with the distributional outcomes of market processes” (p. 282). Starr (1991) maintained that the proposed solution, to replace citizenship with consumer choice, was simplistic and disagreed with “privatization pushers” who attempted to convince people that they could solve an enormous diversity of problems through privatization alone.

As the economic insecurities expanded, ill will toward the helpless poor hardened (Greider, 1997). This burden of welfare was portrayed as “sapping the nation’s vital juices, encouraging crime and slothfulness. This social scapegoating, laced with racial hostility, was encouraged by the market reformers as a way to advance their vision for disassembling the public realm” (p. 382).

Increased competition. Roman (1990) was not convinced that “weakening the dominant player will, in the long run, enable the two or three competitors for which there may be room in the market to generate more than offsetting gains” (p. 233). Skepticism existed in the mind of Hodge (2000) as well because of the conflict between the goal of expanding competition and the wish to maximize the revenues by selling off assets. Obviously, increased competition would lower the possible profit of the deal, which would mean less money in the public purse to pay down the debt.

Private wealth gains. Starr (1991) wrote that even those in favour of selling off government owned assets doubted the rationale behind privatizing public institutions that would continue to receive public funds because they would not be totally dependent on the market. These private companies had reason to increase their share of public funds, and were capable of corruption. Hodge (2000) contended that many special interest groups were keenly interested in privatization schemes because of the possibility of considerable private wealth gains. However, he was quick to point out that such groups did not portray the interests of the community on this issue. Politicians in developing countries, with opportunities for significant personal gain, “cannot afford to offend foreign banks, the IMF, the United States and its allies....The function of these political lackeys was to carry out ‘reform’, which meant deregulation, privatization, opening up of market opportunities to the global sharks, and cutting back ‘unnecessary’

expenditures on health care, education, food and housing” (Herman, 2000, p. 13). Marcuse (2000) explained that what we see happening today is that divisions are now among classes of people and not among states, as was previously the case.

Elimination of unions. Chubb and Moe (1990) maintained that “unions will operate at a serious disadvantage in a market setting” (p. 53) because decision makers in the private sector would not look favourably upon worker protection or collective bargaining.

Disadvantages of Deregulation and Privatization

Privatization diminished the state’s capacity to influence sustainable and equitable development; reduced public spending due to diminishing revenues (Ad hoc forum planning committee, 2001); created social injustices in public services, “with a disproportionate burden of such cuts affecting women and the poor” (p. 3); and undermined equity, quality, and accountability (Gormley, 1991). Van Horn (1991) contended that privatization was not immune from suffering from the same weaknesses often inherent in government-run programs: “Based on the evidence to date, there is every reason to be highly skeptical of claims that privatization will magically overcome the mundane, but common problems of poor management and greed” (p. 279). Gormley (1991) feared that responsibility for vital public services would be turned over to unreliable entrepreneurs. According to Van Horn (1991), no innate reasons existed that guaranteed that privately controlled entities would be less expensive. In fact, Gormley (1991) maintained that privatization could increase costs, and gains in efficiency experienced at the outset might not continue indefinitely. Starr (1991) claimed that the private producers in the U.S. lobbied for more spending in privately run publicly funded programs. Often times they utilized their power to procure preferred conditions under state contracts and reimbursement schemes. Van Horn (1991) contended that before implementing privatization, those responsible

should seriously consider the possibility and consequence of implementing private sector monopolies for service delivery. Some forms of privatization, Gormley (1991) argued, such as contracting out without competition, merely substituted a public monopoly with a private monopoly. Beesley (1997) reported that the primary criticism of privatization in the UK had been “monopoly exploitation” (p. 48). In addition, Smith (1990) maintained that privatization did not automatically financially benefit the government, by, for example, contributing to reducing the public debt.

A reason to be suspicious of privatization is because it creates winners and losers (Gormley, 1991). Beesley and Littlechild (1997) contended that although a more efficient operation would benefit taxpayers and consumers, privatization often times led to unemployment. According to Gormley (1991), because private entrepreneurs would attempt to lower costs thereby increasing profits, there might be an accompanying deterioration of services. Also, it is unlikely a privatized company would provide uneconomic services, thus a particular group of citizens might go without these services (Beesley & Littlechild, 1997). Starr (1991) argued that another glaring disadvantage was that, “in the market, some people have more ‘votes’ because they have more money, and they need concern themselves with no one’s benefit except their own” (p. 28). Gains were often made by private sector owners because one of the first things they did after privatization was to eliminate unions that protected their workers and forced them to, from management’s point of view, pay higher wages and provide better benefits than was necessary or desirable (Stewart, 1998). The existing collective agreements were replaced by more “flexible” working conditions offering fewer rights, little if any negotiating power, and reduced benefits (Ad hoc Forum Planning Committee, 2001).

Privatization, which Camp (2001) referred to as a plague, had essentially robbed citizens of their joint properties such as railroads and airlines: “And as its dark twin, deregulation, brings only misery to the general population, someone might think to ask if there is any mechanism or method of accountability somewhere” (p. 29). Dobbin (2001) concurred with Camp in his assessment of deregulation which had not increased choice or reduced prices: “But when the medicine fails, the prescription is always to prescribe even stronger medicine” (p. 31) as evidenced by the Canadian government’s pursuit of more deregulation through upcoming trade deals. Herman (2000) explained that privatization weakened the state and simultaneously increased the power of corporations thereby enabling them to dictate politics and public policy. Also, he continued, it strengthened individualism and greed to the detriment of any semblance of the common good. Even Chubb and Moe (1990) admitted that markets were incapable of offering citizens “perfect competition or perfect choice” (p. 190).

The intent of privatization was questioned by Hodge (2000) because there were such a diverse number of objectives. He wondered whether or not it was a political tool being utilized to privatize the entire economy. Starr (1991) agreed: “The intent is not just to improve the efficiency of particular services, but to change aspirations in our society, to direct them into the market and out of the arena of politics and the sphere of common responsibility” (p. 35). Furthermore, he argued that if we accepted privatization as our economic model we were accepting the assumptions about the limited capabilities of democratically elected governments and a reduced role for common obligation. Because of this, Starr (1991) concluded that we should not accept these premises and we should be suspicious of what privatization represents and what it promises. Advocates of privatization, according to him, did not think highly of democratic governance and, therefore, were not concerned about any loss of public control. He

claimed that many citizens thought that privatization transferred more power and influence to corporations than it should. He contended that the Marxist illusion of the state disappearing would also hold true for capitalism despite the wishes of those espousing privatization.

Increased competition and suitable alternatives available to consumers would compel improvement (Osborne & Plastrik, 1997). They thought that it was a simplistic notion to think that private ownership guaranteed effectiveness and efficiency because replacing a public monopoly with a private one is seldom advantageous. Gormley (1991) maintained that an advantage of privatization proposals was that it encouraged creative alternatives to be brought forth that would enable society to offer choice without relinquishing its historic desire for a healthy public sector. According to Ingstrup and Crookall (1998), excellent public service operations were capable of competing with the best the private sector had to offer, which deflated the ideological zeal for privatization.

Hodge (2000) cautioned decision makers intent on privatizing the economy when he wrote,

...some of the groups served by large enterprises are the least articulate and most vulnerable of our society. The vulnerability of such groups makes it particularly important to articulate any areas of trade-off that might be occurring throughout the privatization process and, wherever necessary protect their interests. The social impact that privatization activities have had on the number of disconnections from utilities [in the United Kingdom] such as gas or water is a case in point. (p. 9)

Beesley and Littlechild (1997) insisted that because of the possible social impacts, compromises would have to be negotiated when it was considered to be important to protect adversely affected interest groups even though it would diminish benefits to consumers as a whole. They further

contended that for privatization to succeed these political realities must be faced so the arrangement of the privatization system is crucial.

Alternatives to Deregulation and Privatization

Stewart (1998) suggested that there might be too many crown corporations in Canada, and that there may be an argument to include private firms in providing some of these services. But, he argued, we have been led by ideology and not by common sense. He maintained there was a place for public ownership because “there are tasks that must be done—such as running a transportation system that serves everyone, not just the centre of the nation—tasks that private enterprise has given up on because it cannot make money with them” (p. 261). Many of those who opposed privatization admitted the failures of public bureaucracies. But they maintained that unsuccessful public bureaucracies could be improved through redesigning the institution by making bureaucracies more accountable to politicians who were accountable to the electorate (Gormley, 1991). Furthermore, he felt that not enough effort was put into utilizing the creative potential of workers on how to improve organizational performance. According to Starr (1991), we have to move away from the notion of the inevitability of government to fail at everything it does, because we require the distinctive potential of the state to cope with a diversity of dilemmas traditionally unsatisfactorily handled by the marketplace and private charities.

Policy analysis is required in highly complex issues, so that better data can be collected to empower public agencies to become more efficient and effective (Gormley, 1991). Despite the fact that competition, deregulation, and privatization were normally considered closely linked in political phraseology, “a strict scientific assessment seeking to isolate the effects of ownership changes on performance would require separate measurement and statistical control of each of these variables” (Hodge, 2000, p. 175). Gormley (1991) further contended that the public sector

could be revitalized without necessarily turning to privatization because it was not the only avenue to efficiency and consumers' rights. A forum participation guide (2001) produced for the Second Summit of the Americas stated,

...[t]he goal should not be traditional protectionism, but building a state accountable to society that can implement a democratically established national development plan. This may involve the protection of certain sectors considered strategic within a country's plan, but more importantly, it means promoting forward-looking development. Regulation does not imply inhibiting private initiative. On the contrary, it means establishing clear rules balancing rights and obligations, ensuring that both national and international capital promote a country's fair and sustainable development. (p. 3)

The document offered the argument that if the state was to assume this renewed function, new international rules would need to be democratically developed through extensive deliberations with constituents. This would mean that sovereignty would belong to the people, when they decided to adhere to these international regulations instituted for the common good.

Pack (1991) admitted that arguments for privatization had many merits but there were no compelling theoretical arguments nor empirical evidence that justified full scale privatization: "The current signals are blinking yellow" (p. 305). According to Hodge (2000), since privatization had been so far a one-way process, it was critical to do what was best for the community based on the most precise information available. Richardson (1990) also advised caution. He maintained that problems with privatization must be addressed, and decision makers must be able to guarantee that the long term gains of deregulation outweighed the possible costs.

A country's unique circumstances must be seriously considered when embarking upon a privatization program (Smith, 1990). Canada, for example, has a history and geography like no

other. Canada has developed “a particular mix of government holdings, special concerns about foreign ownership and distinct associations of government ownership with national symbols and national pride” (p. 44). A mixed economy thrives in Canada, Roman (1990) stated, where regulation, deregulation, competition, and public ownership and provision of services coexist. He maintained that,

...an attempt to change from one regime to another is an attempt to make new rules so as to obtain a larger share of society's wealth. Only when we understand it that way can we begin to ask who is trying to do what, to whom, and for what gain. Who will be the new winners and losers? Stripped of economic theory and the ideological wrappings, naked self-interest is much easier to understand. (p. 243)

Beesley and Littlechild (1997) claimed that certain general conditions should guide privatization policy. Firstly, privatization schemes should benefit consumers, by providing lower prices and improved quality of services, rather than benefit shareholders. Secondly, competition should be promoted with strict competition policy. Thirdly, ground rules should be clearly laid out regarding the criteria for providing uneconomic services to those in need and the sources of finance for these. Fourthly, compensation should be made available for serious transitional unemployment. It was the opinion of Osborne and Plastrik (1997) that functions could be left entirely to the market if the market could provide them without excluding citizens from access to goods and services considered by society as universal necessities. They further declared that if privatization proceeded there was still a function for the public sector other than paying for or operating activities. Programs might have to be regulated and regulations enforced by public officials. Gormley (1991) added that “privatization is less appropriate for regulation [of firms or individuals] than for the distribution of services...less appropriate when social services are

involved than when physical services are involved...and less appropriate for core services than for auxiliary services” (pp. 310-311). Roman (1990) argued that profits must be regulated if the objective of economic regulation is to protect citizens from the incompetence and abuse of monopoly power.

Stewart (1998) wrote of his dismay with the shortsightedness of society, ...[d]espite the teachings of history, we still rigorously divide our notions of economic efficiency into two watertight sectors: the public economy and the private one. This segregation allows us to accept with equanimity that the one sector, public, can be starved while the other, private is loaded up with goodies from the same purse that has snapped shut on the public sector. (pp. 250-251)

Hodge (2000) stated that there was a growing worldwide concern with the privatization trend and agreed with Gormley (1991) who felt that people should be approaching this phenomenon “with considerable caution” (p. 14).

So one can clearly see that the macro argument regarding individual rights versus the collective good has been further complicated by global pressures. Citizens are told that the direction in which the world is now moving, where corporations have more power and influence than duly elected governments, is beyond their control, and that they better learn to adapt or be left behind. Others, of course, disagree. They contend that collectivism is crucial for a peaceful, fair, just, and equitable society and must be the priority of forward-thinking individuals. Fuel is added to this macro debate by those who claim that our public education system is failing us. However, many education researchers reject this claim because of a lack of empirical proof.

Unfounded Shortcomings of Public Education

Of course, there were those who argued that public education was being accused of shortcomings that should be attributed to other segments of society. Supporters of public education rejected the claims made by the dissenters by contending that the claims lacked acceptable empirical proof. Wilkinson (1994) contended that the struggle was not solely about academic standards, but very much about concerns with values and power. He maintained that deeper societal problems have negatively affected the ability of schools to carry out their principal task of educating young people, “and which, if not recognized by society at large and effectively resolved, will make it increasingly difficult for a large proportion of schools to function satisfactorily for either individual or societal well-being” (p. 16). Guppy and Davies (1999) wrote that others considered decreasing confidence in education as part of a particular hostility towards welfare-state institutions in general.

The exaggeration of educational crisis was noted by several authors (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Bracey, 2002; Dobbin, 1997; Livingstone, 1999; Robertson, 1998; Taylor, 2001). Barlow and Robertson (1994) challenged the illiteracy figures presented in the 1992 Economic Council report, while Dobbin (1997) challenged the 34 percent dropout statistic presented in the Conference Board of Canada study. Bracey (2002) warned that there were many “ideologically loaded statistical missiles that the public schools’ enemies are launching...it’s a war, so all’s fair” (pp. 13,14). He claimed the enemies of public education were universities, business and industry, Christian conservatives, and public education constituents like boards of education. More generally, Livingstone (1999) wrote,

...[t]he claim that declining school quality is serving to depreciate human capital is typically made in terms of young people’s falling performance on standardized tests.

Such historical comparisons are often fraught with fallacy of composition errors of logic. That is, either average scores of entire current youth cohorts are compared with those of more restricted earlier enrollments, or specific bits of knowledge are used to argue an increasing general ignorance thesis. While most of these claims have now been systematically refuted...they continue to be recycled in ever more selective forms....In sum, the evidence does not show any cumulative general decline in the quality of education. (pp. 167-168)

Taylor (2001) argued that this attack on public education had managed to shift the focus from the growing concern about the poor economic and social performance of corporations to the present crisis in public education. She claimed that this was attained despite the fact that there was no empirical proof that economic difficulties were closely linked to education. So what we saw was a concerted effort to convince the public that its education system was ineffective and inefficient. Bracey (2002) wrote, "The goal is simple: If you can make people anxious about their future, you can control them. People who are anxious about the future are less able to see their neighbours as fellow citizens and more likely to perceive them as competitors" (p. 7). Consequently, others have replied to these concerns by insisting that education was being blamed for problems caused by circumstances beyond its control. The next section deals with the shortcomings of charter schools that some people think are simply a step towards a voucher system and ultimately to the privatization of education.

Critiques of Charter Schools

As part of the micro debate, Chubb and Moe (1990) claimed the way to create effective schools is to substitute the market for democratic politics for which a sound philosophical base has yet to be established (Taylor, 1995). Ironically, it was the elite, at the turn of the century,

who proposed bureaucratic structures to remove schools from popular political control (Apple, 1982; Lowe, 1992b; Shor, 1986). According to Lowe (1992b), the measures produced by the civil rights movement and other popular forces, were the real objects of conservative complaints about bureaucracy in schools. The fact that the elite wished to re-establish market power over schools was indicative of the partial success by groups—race, class, and gender groups who have not historically been helped much by schools—in challenging the hegemonic control of the state (Apple, 1982).

Apple (1982) argued,

...by stimulating an ideology of possessive individualism the economy creates a crisis in the school. The school, which under current financial and ideological conditions cannot meet the stimulated needs of competing individuals and interest groups, loses its legitimacy, hence, must respond in a way that continues to expand an individualistic market. (p. 122)

Yet, Lowe (1992b) argued that choice certainly had not accomplished increased quality choices in the private sector of the economy. In fact,

...to the extent that those with limited resources have won forms of protection it has not been guaranteed by the play of the market, but from government regulations. The conservative agenda of deregulation over the past decade has eroded those protections and greatly increased the disparity between the wealthy and the poor. A market system of education is merely an extension of deregulation that promises to compound social inequities. (p. 30)

A likely result of schools that enrolled students whose parents were unable to supplement tuition paid on their behalf by government in a system that would allow this would be “educational

versions of fast-food conglomerates with scripted teacher behaviors similar to the standardized patterns of McDonalds' order clerks. These institutions would compose the bottom tier of an educational hierarchy based on privilege" (Lowe, 1992b, p. 32).

Barlow and Robertson (1994) warned that those who wished to privatize education, viewed the restriction of "choice" as the cause of all evil. The right to choose was considered to be "the solution to our moral, economic and political conundrums" (p. 187). They further contended that governments, through their bureaucracies, were seen to limit choice, and the marketplace was thought to be the savior because it promoted and facilitated choice. The word choice is being skillfully utilized by privatization advocates (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Lowe, 1992b; Miner, 1992; Robertson, 1998) to soften the blow of the privatization of educational services. As Harvard professor Gary Orfield (1992) pointed out, "choice is a term that is difficult to disagree with in principle, but which has no clear meaning until many blanks are filled in. In other words, it is an almost perfect political concept" (p. 12). Robertson (1998) wrote that charter schools affiliated themselves with the innocent sounding and market-friendly word choice, because who could possibly be opposed to choice. The right to choose in modern civilizations had been toned down by the duty to ponder the effects of choice on others and to consider the public interest (Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

Both Canadian and American writers, as part of the micro debate, warned that charter schools were considered to be a stepping stone for those advocating the use of vouchers and the eventual total privatization of education (Casey, 2000; Dobbin, 1997; Kachur, 1999; Robertson, 1998). Casey (2000) insisted that charter schools were intended to prepare Americans for the "transformation of public schooling, through vouchers, into a market driven by consumer demand and corporate franchise supply" (p. 19) and Dobbin (1997) referred to them as "a Trojan

horse of those who would privatize education” (p. 1). Finally, Robertson (1998) argued that the present charter proponents were voucher advocates who intended “to achieve their goals through the back door” (p. 289).

Unregulated school choice was opposed because people feared that the program would destroy public goods such as desegregation, teachers’ unions, a common curriculum, and provisions for children with special needs (Lowe, 1992a), as well as serve as the next step in the move towards privatization of education (Dobbin, 1997; Robertson, 1998). There was a fear that unregulated school choice would weaken an already embattled public education system (Apple & Bracey, 2001; Witte, 2000).

Internal Claims

Anticipated problems internal to charter schools included negatively affecting students, teachers, and administrators (Apple & Bracey, 2001; Kachur, 1999); and not being held accountable (Apple & Bracey, 2001; Miner, 2000).

Negative effects on students, teachers and administrators. The authority for schools of choice to expel students or to refuse to readmit them was crucial for two reasons (Chubb & Moe, 1995). It was required to determine the boundaries of their organizations and to be in control of them. Also, students would be well aware of what was expected of them as part of their educational contracts: “Since it is comparative test scores that determine whether a school is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, children who do perform well on such reductive tests are seen as welcome. Those who do not are often discouraged or are marginalized” (Apple & Bracey, 2001, p. 6). Consequently, they maintained, most children harmed by such reforms were precisely those whom school choice supporters stated they were assisting.

Bauman (1996), Freedman (1995), Fuller (1996), Kachur (1999), and Lowe (1992a) maintained that most educated parents and those already involved in their children's schooling would be more active shoppers and the ones most likely to participate in choice programs. Lowe (1992a) stated, "As in the marketplace writ large, what one can purchase depends on how much currency is brought to the transaction" (p. 28). Bosetti et al. (2000) have also stated that Alberta's charter schools were supported by "well-educated people of middle to upper-income" (p. 162).

Choice advocates should seriously consider how to avoid advancing the racial and class segregation in the schools that was occurring in many urban areas (Bauman, 1996). Kozol (1992b) also wrote about the dangers of unregulated choice plans, as espoused by Chubb and Moe. He worried that the less fortunate would be further isolated by being consigned to places nobody would choose if he or she had any choice at all because charter schools would accept only the students they wanted. The less fortunate would be cast aside to residual schools that operated as simple warehouses (Kohl, 1992) "as the middle-class tsks-tsks at the 'poor choices these people make'" (Barlow & Robertson, 1994, p. 199). Chubb and Moe (1995) and Wilkinson (1994) contended that in an attempt to enhance choice for the underprivileged, transportation subsidies could be provided for those in need if tax revenues allowed. If measures were taken to assist the powerless, school choice plans might permit a handful of poor people to receive an improved education (Apple & Bracey, 2001).

Witte (2000) warned that a program initiated to assist poor families would be manipulated, so that it subsidizes middle-class families to make choices they were capable of making on their own. Once money earmarked for poor districts was routinely spent on selected schools in the inner-city and in the suburbs it would never be retargeted. Changing the

parameters of the program would be accomplished, according to Witte (2000), by gaining political acquiescence and support in the media and the courts. He explained that “it occurs slowly, continuously taking advantage of inattention and the inability of opposing groups to maintain constant counterpressure” (p. 191).

Witte (2000) also asserted,

...I share the view that it is duplicitous and fundamentally perverse for a democratic process to enact a policy with the rationale of helping a population in need, but ending with a policy that in all likelihood will do the opposite....[I]t will transfer public cash benefits directly to a population that is considerably better off. (p. 192)

Emberley and Newell (1994) recognized the importance of market forces. However, they contended that they were not the answer to everything. They argued that market forces were inappropriate in the public school system because the rhetoric of choice, while worth considering, “risk[s] abdicating a sense of public responsibility for education, especially toward the disadvantaged” (p. 68). Crain and Wells (1994) reported that desegregation did indeed improve achievement due to the resources and standards available in middle-class settings, which usually had better teachers and more demanding programs.

Freedman (1995) claimed that because teachers were controlled by a centralized bureaucracy, they had become tired and demoralized. He further contended that many teachers would willingly give up their negotiated benefits to work in autonomous charter schools. This may not necessarily be the case as, according to Bosetti et al. (2000), of the 88 percent of teachers from nine charter schools in Alberta who responded to their survey, only 54 percent stated they were returning for sure. Interestingly, only 7 percent of all the responding teachers were full members of the Alberta Teachers’ Association. Robertson (1995) was not convinced

that school choice was devised to “liberate frustrated, rule-bound teachers” (p. 127). In fact, Crawford (2001) maintained that teachers in charter schools had less power than those in public schools because they were controlled by charter school founders who dictated school philosophies. Lowe (1992a) argued that vulnerability due to the absence of union protection could limit teachers’ autonomy to a greater extent than the bureaucratic regulations found in public schools. This market approach would give school administrators the unlimited authority to freely hire and fire teachers, regardless of training and experience (Casey, 2000).

According to Chubb and Moe (1995), school choice would result in the elimination of statewide tenure laws. Teachers would be allowed to join unions on a school-by-school basis or as part of a larger organization that ran the school, but they must be willing to suffer the consequences if benefits achieved through collective bargaining caused them to be uncompetitive in the education market place. Some entrepreneurs would go to great lengths to ensure non-unionized workplaces (Casey, 2000). Victory Schools, charter schools started by Wall Street financier, Steven Klinsky, made use of a loophole in the state law and purposely enrolled fewer than 250 students in the first year. This strategy enabled him to establish a workplace free of unions. Witte (2000) claimed that some advocates favoured choice as a means of eliminating teachers’ unions that they despised.

Casey (2000), Kachur (1999), Lowe (1992a), and Witte (2000) contended that without union protection the jobs of private school teachers and administrators were insecure and many of their salaries would be considered less than professional. Compensation typically too meager to support a family had meant that private school positions had been most acceptable to the independently wealthy, to members of religious orders, and to families with more than one wage earner (Cookson & Persell, 1985). Interestingly, Nathan (1999) argued that teachers who wished

to participate in charter schools should have their status protected. In other words, teachers should not lose their seniority or be penalized on their pension plans if they wished to return to the public system from a charter school. Chubb and Moe (1995) would grant the state the power to certify teachers if they were minimal like those applied in most states to private schools.

Much more time in market driven schools was spent on maintaining the image of a “good” school, with much less time spent by teachers and administrators on curricular substance (Staff, 1999a). Consequently, markets in schools seemed to worsen, rather than improve, work load, pressure, and access to resources (Apple & Bracey, 2001). Interestingly, Witte (2000) reported that some American teachers’ associations had supported charter schools to head off vouchers. This ignored the distinct possibility that these forms of choice might incrementally lead to vouchers (Witte, 2000).

Loss of accountability. Kachur (1999) contended that public education advocates were of the opinion that private schools were held less accountable than public schools. There was no need for the state to hold schools of choice accountable for student achievement or other indicators of the quality of school performance (Chubb & Moe, 1995). They insisted that accountability would come from below as students and parents made their choices of what school to attend. According to Apple and Bracey (2001), this lack of accountability for schools of choice is not receiving much attention due to the low number of participating students. However, they predicted that if the school choice movement significantly increases in size, the public would demand to know how public money was spent and what was accomplished.

It is not an easy chore to effectively evaluate charter school accountability (Fusarelli, 2001). Hess (2001) maintained that the scarcity of reliable data could make it troublesome to appraise the effectiveness of charter schools. He further claimed that because of this difficulty,

low rates of nonrenewals did not serve as irrefutable evidence that charter schools were attaining their instructional objectives. According to him, charter schools most commonly monitored school finances, conformity to regulations, student achievement, and school attendance. He contended that three of these four were more about paper shuffling than about teaching and learning.

Fusarelli (2001) maintained that sanctioning low-performing charter schools was rarely done. Hess (2001) contended that even generally positive reviews conceded the probability that there were notable numbers of low-performing charter schools that were not being closed: “Less than 1 per cent of charter schools have ever been shuttered for reasons related to performance” (p. 142). He stated that as long as students continued to enroll in a school, those families evidently concluded the performance was acceptable. For authorizing bodies to close or refuse to renew a school required them to tell this community that it was either ignorant, due to its inability to judge school quality, or misguided, because it was not concerned with school quality. Vergari (2001) held that consequently, charter school authorizers continued to grapple with numerous accountability challenges. These included, “figuring out how charter schools should fit into existing state and local standards and testing regimes; how to measure accountability for charter schools with unconventional goals, learning processes, or student populations; and how to determine when charter school performance is good enough” (p. 138).

External Claims

Expressed external concerns were that charter schools received funds that normally went to public education (Apple & Bracey, 2001; Head, 1994), took the best students and left the hard to teach students behind (Kozol, 1992b; Robertson, 1995), and could cost private schools their autonomy (Gormley, 1991; Starr, 1991).

Drain funds from public schools. According to Freedman (1995), people employed in the public education system, as well as others, feared that the public system might be destroyed by the brute competition brought about by deregulated choice. Head (1994) did not warn of destruction, but he was certain that with a deregulated education system based on choice the public system would surely decline while private schools would grow in number. Public system authorities would have to recognize their competition because public schools would have empty seats and decreased funding if disgruntled parents opted for charter schools (Freedman, 1995).

In Philadelphia, private-school students, who would have cost the district nothing when their charter school used to be a private school (Snyder, 2001), were costing the district \$25.5 million in 2001. In return, the state only contributed \$1.6 million to offset the added cost. However, Rofes (1999) claimed that charter schools participating in his study did not lose money because new housing developments brought in an influx of new families that more than made up for the number of students who left for charter schools.

“Cream” higher achieving students from public schools. Although Bosetti et al. (2000) rejected the claim that Alberta charter schools would create a two-tier education system by creaming off the most able students, they maintained that charter schools would be more effective if they could choose their students. They maintained that children with special needs were being admitted, and they placed a strain on school resources and negatively affected student achievement scores. Therefore, Robertson (1995) was correct when she accurately predicted that charter schools, compelled to abide by the primary objective of efficiency, would be reluctant to enroll hungry or poor or disabled kids, or even kids with poor standardized test scores that might lower the class average. She argued that the charter school movement was “a transparent attempt to enshrine privilege and advantage” (p. 127).

The crucial nature of controlling admissions holds true in the United States as well (Chubb & Moe, 1995). They argued,

...[s]chools must be able to define their own missions and build their own programs in their own ways, and they cannot do that if their student population is thrust on them by outsiders. Schools must be free to admit as many or as few students as they want, based on whatever criteria they think relevant—intelligence, interest, motivation, special needs—and they must be free to exercise their own, informal judgments about individual applicants. Such schools will set their own tuitions. (p. 155)

Those who opposed unregulated choice argued that at best, through a universal choice program, charter schools would enroll the superior students, mainly from the middle class, presently attending public schools (Fuller, 1996; Witte, 2000). They alleged that the result would be an unfair apportioning of resources and a noticeable increasing achievement gap between schools and socioeconomic groups. Kozol (1992a) contended that choice would create a “social Darwinist scenario, a triage operation that will filter off the fortunate and leave the rest in schools where the children of the ‘better’ parents do not need to see them” (p. 19). Despite claims by proponents of choice, Witte (2000) seriously doubted that the stratification of schools would be determined by merit rather than by income. Also, he stated that even if he was proven wrong, he would still prefer to expend resources to educate large numbers of children rather than concentrating them on a few who were predicted to be gifted. If unregulated choice occurred, “parents will feel no obligation to raise tax-support for public schools attended by their neighbors’ children. Instead of fighting for systematic excellence and equity for all, we will have taught them to advance their own kids at whatever cost to other people’s children” (Kozol, 1992a, p. 19). This would further disadvantage the disadvantaged, according to Fuller (1996),

because when low performers were streamed into one classroom, they tended to underachieve.

Witte (2000) firmly insisted that choice programs could be constructed to prevent creaming off the best students.

Cost private schools their autonomy. Because providing choice to citizens is often times cited as a strong argument in favour of privatization, greater public regulation of the private sector would be required (Gormley, 1991). He further predicted that ultimately the distinction between the public and private sectors would become less clear. Starr (1991) concurred with Gormley when he claimed,

...the effort to move from public to private institutions risks making private institutions more public—[due] to more government regulation in the form of audits, legislative scrutiny, and judicial review—and diminishing some of the advantage of the contrasting alternatives in the public and private sectors that we now have. (p. 34)

Obviously this was a concern for private schools, according to Apple and Bracey (2001). A number of Christian schools opposed receiving public money because they believed that it would inevitably lead to control by government. Also, Duffy (2000) alleged that home schoolers in California opposed that state's November 2000 referendum on vouchers because they feared government interference.

As was stated above, there were external and internal concerns held by opponents of charter schools that credibly added to the current micro debate. Internally, there was a concern that students, teachers, and administrators would be negatively affected and that it would be difficult to hold charter schools accountable if their success was simply determined by parents sending their children to them. External effects caused by the existence of charter schools could seriously undermine public schools. Funds would be drained from an already underfunded

public education system, the higher achieving students would be creamed from public schools, and the autonomy of private schools would be adversely affected. In addition to these claims, considerable argument existed that dispelled positive claims suggested by proponents.

Challenged Proponents' Internal Claims

Opponents challenged many internal claims espoused by proponents. They maintained that student achievement had not been shown to improve, that charter schools would not necessarily be less bureaucratic, and that charter schools would not automatically be more efficient.

No proof of improved student achievement. The idea that we can hold schools accountable is a myth (Rothstein, 1998). He argued that there was certainly no consensus to date concerning what methods could objectively measure educational outcomes. The evidence proving that school choice improved student achievement had been mixed at best (Apple & Bracey, 2001). Fuller (1996) and Talbert-Johnson (2000) went even further when they insisted that there was no evidence to support this claim. They maintained that it was difficult to discern improvements resulting from better schooling from preceding effects that came about from choosing students with the best record of prior achievement.

Results such as these were questionable (Fusarelli, 2001) because he argued that they might be more to do with students' prior academic experiences than the present performance of the charter school. He contended that an accurate measure of achievement would be "to compare student achievement in charter schools with that of traditional public schools with similar demographics" (p. 163). According to Bosetti et al. (2000), Alberta charter schools had not been in operation long enough to completely determine their efficacy in enhancing student achievement. Furthermore, they admitted that "to date, there has not been a clearly accepted

definition of what constitutes ‘student learning’ or what should constitute improvement” (p. 154).

Not automatically more efficient. Van Horn (1991) contended that privatization was not immune from suffering from the same weaknesses often inherent in government-run programs: “Based on the evidence to date, there is every reason to be highly skeptical of claims that privatization will magically overcome the mundane, but common problems of poor management and greed” (p. 279). Gormley (1991) feared that responsibility for vital public services would be turned over to unreliable entrepreneurs. No innate reasons existed that guaranteed that privately controlled entities would be less expensive (Van Horn, 1991). In fact, Gormley (1991) argued that privatization could increase costs and “initial efficiency gains from privatization may not persist over time” (p. 309). According to Starr (1991), private producers in the United States lobbied for more spending in privately run publicly funded programs.

Proponents of private control of education always claimed that the private sector could financially (and academically) outperform public schools. However, Edison Schools Inc., the 8-year-old for-profit company, posted a net loss of \$49.5 million on revenues of \$133 million in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1999. In fiscal 1998, the company lost \$22 million on revenues of \$69 million (Staff, 1999b). To make up the shortfall, the company was offering public stock. Edison invested roughly \$9,666 per student. If a similar amount had been introduced into Milwaukee Public Schools, the school division would have secured another \$966 million.

Not necessarily less bureaucratic. According to Lowe (1992a), Chubb & Moe failed to acknowledge that the private sector was very much controlled by bureaucracies to the point that intricately bureaucratized corporations produced a high proportion of today’s wealth. In fact,

business influence had much to do with the development of bureaucratized, centralized systems of public education (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Tyack (1974) argued that interestingly, bureaucratic structures were partly designed by elites at the turn of the century to remove schools from political control.

Deregulation in Alberta at the local level would be attained through increased centralization at provincial and ministerial levels (Kachur, 1999). According to him, the consequences of more choice would not lead to less government as promised by promoters. This view was supported by Taylor (2001) when she stated: "States continue to regulate education through increased control over standards, accountability measures, and funding. The trend is therefore towards a strong state that steers at a distance, and an increasingly market-oriented civil society" (p. 8). Even Chubb and Moe (1995) and Bosetti et al. (2000) admitted that forms of bureaucratic control were necessary. Chubb and Moe (1995) wrote about the need for Choice Offices and Parent Information Centres. Bosetti et al. (2000) concluded in their study of Alberta charter schools that

...if charter schools are conceived as a mechanism to leverage change in public education, and if they are to be sites for the development of innovative practices, it would make sense for the government to assume full responsibility for charter schools, overseeing all charter schools in the province, and appointing a supervisory body responsible for granting and renewing charters, for monitoring and evaluating charter schools, and for providing technical assistance and support. (p. 167)

In New Zealand, the reduced educational bureaucracy moved from the public sector to the private sector but did not disappear (Fiske & Ladd, 2000). Witte (2000) alleged that some

advocates might see choice simply as a way to retaliate against educational bureaucracies that they loathed and may not be opposed to bureaucracies in general.

The re-regulation of education brought about by a quasi-market promising increased consumer choice would result, ironically, in less citizen voice (Kachur, 1999). Democratic participation was silenced when ethical and political debates about the objectives of education ceased because power over education rested with the “invisible hand” of the market. He claimed that consequently, “society is reduced to a collection of atomized consumers whose freedom consists in making consumer choices based on unequal purchasing power. The political currency is no longer language but its debasement through advertising and the dollar” (p. 118). Bauman (1996) also wrote about the importance of democracy in deciding upon important policies because it permitted and even invited competition and compromise among competing values and points of view. He argued that one of the cornerstones of public education was, in fact, conveying an appreciation for democracy where the interests and concerns of the entire community were stated through public policy determined by group decision-making.

Lowe (1992a) argued that bureaucratic regulations promoting “desegregation, bilingual education, and the education of the handicapped, institutionalizing a modicum of equity in public schools as a response to those traditionally denied power ” (p. 27) brought about by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, were the real targets of complaint by choice proponents. Placing the onus on individuals to find a more effective education for their children was attractive to these proponents because it reaffirmed their conviction in individual aspiration and freedom (Kozol, 1992b). But, he maintained, “to ask an individual to break down doors that we have chained and bolted in advance of his [sic] arrival is unfair” (p. 24).

Head (1994) insisted that a public educational system obviously protected values and differences of opinion and ably defended against anarchy while promoting democracy. Through a universal school choice system,

...authority over education is to be removed from the public; the new system is to be made very difficult to change; managers exercising 'concentrated authority' are to play a major role in it. Such systems are not unheard of in the history of governance structures. They are not, however, usually called 'democratic'. They have other names. (Fowler, 1995, p. 167)

Therefore, Bauman (1996) contended, unregulated choice programs would probably heighten a school's orientation to the personal benefits of individuals at the expense of the public intentions of education.

Challenged Proponents' External Claims

External claims espoused by proponents were challenged by opponents. There was no available research to support the claim of proponents that there would be a greater diversity of schools due to the existence of charter schools. Also, public schools, due to competition provided by charter schools, were not necessarily more responsive to the needs and desires of parents.

No proof of increased diversity of schools. Apple and Bracey (2001) reported that evidence collected internationally clearly indicated that the effects of the competitive market on schools were not to stimulate diversity in schools and curriculum but to bring about the exact opposite. Most schools became even more alike and tended to employ methods and curricula that had not been proven to succeed (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). According to Fuller (1996), "No evidence yet demonstrates that choice sparks inventive change inside classrooms"

(p. 39). Kozol (1992a) and Rofes (1999) warned that another concern was that under an entrepreneurial model, public schools would assume new functions, such as “advertising” and “public relations”, in order to compete by attracting students. They further alleged that this, obviously, would cause a diversion of funds from teaching into selling. “There is a serious danger that these extra-instructional functions will overwhelm the educational work of the school, taking energies away from—rather than adding to—the school’s core mission of teaching and learning” (Casey, 2000, p. 19).

The charter school movement did not originally define innovation but what it will eventually mean is evolving as the movement develops (Bosetti et al., 2000). Apple and Bracey (2001) claimed that studies had not shown that charter schools fostered innovation. Indeed, one evaluation of charters in Michigan found that nothing had been tried in a charter school that had not already been tried in public schools (Horn & Miron, 1999). Another study carried out on Massachusetts charter schools, after being in existence for 5 years, discovered that they were not more innovative than public schools in the district: “In fact, the teaching practices commonly found at charter schools were also commonly found in district schools” (Staff, 2000a, p. 12). Opfer (2001) maintained that methods of keeping charter schools accountable had served to cause them to be very similar to other schools.

Not necessarily more responsive. Apple and Bracey (2001) and Rofes (1999) maintained that there was absolutely no evidence that public schools were changing because of the existence of charter schools. Rothstein, Carnoy, and Benveniste (1999) conducted a study of existing public and private schools and found that differences in communities overwhelmed differences in governance. That is, public and private schools in poor suburban neighborhoods resembled each other, but differed from schools in the more affluent communities. These

authors found that public suburban schools were actually more responsive to parents because the parents thought they had both a right and a responsibility to take an active role in their children's education. They also discovered that private schools were more successful at telling parents, that in matters of curriculum and instruction, all decisions rested with the school. Rothstein et al. (1999) found that in poor areas, both public and private schools struggled to involve parents. Private schools were more successful at holding parents accountable because they could make involvement, which usually did not include academic activities, as a condition of admission. At this point little is known of the effects of Alberta's charter schools on the public school system (Bosetti et al., 2000).

Concluding Statements

McMurtry (1998) argued that the appropriation of government in the common interest was reversible. "The lawful grounds and instruments of accountability to society's shared requirements of life have already been won and are available for use by governments if publics demand it" (p. 318). However, Clarke (n.d.) suggested, "...citizens' groups and social movements, North and South, [must] exercise democratic self-governance by confronting the assumptions of corporate authority and the claims to corporate sovereignty that lie behind the major WTO agenda items" (p. 32). Smith (1999) added to this by contending that educating the public was crucial because McMurtry (1998) claimed, "[w]hat is not permitted to be seen remains unseen" (p. 335). People must be informed that the belief that current changes and directions were inevitable was a fabricated creed espoused by corporations through their control of the media (George, 1997). Smith (1999) alerted us to the fact that "[t]he erosion of the democratic process that is so central to current globalization activity can be read as a recipe for eventual violence in the civil realm" (p. 114). He suggested, "[t]he most creative response must

involve a courageous act of encounter that refuses to banish the true complexity of the world into a cosy formula that serves a few at the expense of many” (p.115).

There is a desire of corporations to operate public schools on a for-profit basis. Korten (1995) warned that “the possibilities for profiting by turning classrooms into new mass media outlets for corporate marketing, image building, and ideological molding pitched to young and malleable minds are staggering—frightening” (p. 156). Calvert and Kuehn (1993) admitted that Canadian schools could improve. However, they contended that these improvements should continue to embrace increased inclusivity of students and to incorporate social objectives, not solely economic ones. Korten (1995) stated that schools must be proclaimed advertising-free zones, public schools should continue to be a function of the public sector, and “corporate-sponsored teaching modules should be banned from classroom use under the ban on in-school advertising” (p. 312). Smith (1999) suggested that inclusive discussions concerning the role of education in the context of new global realities were dreadfully required before society moved in the direction of marketizing all public services including education.

Barlow and Robertson (1994) claimed that the educational philosopher John Dewey envisioned choice in education as an activity to collectively choose from among competing alternatives the best possible scenario to benefit all children. They contended that he would be horrified to see choice espoused by some that would benefit a few children at the expense of others, while claiming that the fortunes of all students would improve. Lowe (1992b) insisted that,

...this market ethos ignores any sense of responsibility for others’ education, any obligation for community control of education, any commitment to schools as sites of democratic discourse, any need for the new common curriculum some educators are

forging out of the cultural works and political struggles of the diverse peoples who have shaped the United States. (p. 29)

Osborne (1999) wondered how far a society could cater to difference and choice before it contributed to distrust instead of the more noble attributes of compassion and harmony. Robertson (1995) and Witte (2000) argued that educational “sorting” according to class and race would be perpetuated if the principles of the marketplace were applied to schools. Failure is a serious risk if competition is injected into schooling (Bauman, 1996). According to him, bankruptcy and a financial loss for shareholders were the results of economic marketplace failure. He further alleged that this was a far cry from the devastation resulting from the failure of a noncompetitive school which would affect innocent children who could not be compensated for the most impressionable years of their lives.

Although an admitted charter school supporter, Sarason (1998) was concerned about how and why charter schools were initiated. He stated,

Precisely because charter schools represent an unprecedented critique of and challenge to the existing system, we should feel obliged to support and study them in the most careful, serious, and dispassionate way....I now have to predict that the superficial conceptual rationale for creating charter schools will give rise to processes of implementation that guarantee that, generally speaking, they will fall far short of the mark. I have no doubt that some charter schools will be success stories. Unfortunately, as things are now we will never know why they succeeded, just as we will not know why those that fell short of their mark, or completely failed, had the fate they will have. (p. 65)

Dobbin (1997) maintained that a problem with charter schools was that there was overwhelming evidence that schools ended up picking their students and not the other way

around as was intended. Opfer (2001) was stronger in his criticism of charter schools as he insisted that they were nothing more “than a rhetorical tool used to ensure the reproduction of the necessarily oppressive order of things” (p. 210). George (1997) reminded us that a world ruled by the marketplace was not inevitable, as we had been led to believe, but that, in fact, it was possible to build a different world where oppression was not the order of the day. Chubb and Moe (1990) admitted that public schools, with the right governing institutions, were capable of being as effective as market-driven schools.

Glickman (1993) argued that school choice should be *within* public school districts, provided that (1) all students and parents have equal access to all schools, (2) all schools reflect the diverse population of the district, (3) all public schools are given the opportunity, in terms of finances and support, to develop unique programs, and (4) there is a district strategy to enhance cooperation among all of its schools....Public schools have an obligation to a democratic mission in the education of students. Private schools, by definition, need not have such obligation. (p. 173)

Hill (2000) informed us that we should not confuse the goals of public education with how it was delivered because it was possible to protect undeserving institutions “that are nothing more than accidents of politics and history” (p. 34). Public schools are workshops of our democracy that need to be fortified and preserved, not turned over to free enterprise (Apple & Bracey, 2001). Perhaps Nikiforuk (1993) provided the most accurate analysis of the current crisis in public education when he suggested that “schools cannot change for the better until these too often warring groups [parents and teachers] align themselves against the political powers and economic forces that have neutered the school as a place of community-minded instruction and made each camp a glib scapegoat for school failure” (p. xvii). Krashinsky (1994) contended that,

in other words, governments should attempt to encourage “voice” in the delivery of education by how they design institutions, rather than more choice. McQuaig (1998) echoed these sentiments when she argued that democracy was an extremely powerful tool and was our only hope for a fair and equitable world. It surely is tempting to surround oneself with people that think alike, but obviously not at the expense of the public good. Apple (2000) stated, “The reduction of democracy to selfish individualism may in fact be un-American [obviously un-Canadian]. I doubt that this is what we want as a society” (p. 24). Apple (1982) also warned, “this may be one of the times we should look a gift horse in the mouth” (p. 134).

As was previously stated, there are internal and external claims about the efficacy of charter schools put forth by both proponents and opponents that clearly add to the micro debate of the most effective and efficient delivery of education. Is increased democracy or unbridled competition the preferred approach to improve the public education system? On the one hand, those in favour of charter schools claim that internal improvements would accompany a charter school movement. Charter schools would improve student achievement, be more accountable than present public schools because parents would vote with their feet if they were dissatisfied, provide children from poor homes with a better education, be more efficient, and be more effective because of increased autonomy and competition. External claims included an increase in the diversity of schools, which would provide parents with greater choice, and a public education system more responsive to the needs and wishes of parents because of increased competition.

On the other hand, opponents pointed to negative internal and external effects of the presence of charter schools. There was a concern for students, teachers, and administrators who they maintained would be adversely affected, and for the inability to hold charter schools truly

accountable if they were solely judged by the numbers of attending students. Public schools, which are presently finding funding levels insufficient, would receive less money with the advent of charter schools. Another concrete fear of public schools was the exodus of its top students for charter schools. Some opponents stated that private schools would lose their autonomy as the difference between public and private dissipated. The final section reports the results of studies carried out on present school choice programs in different countries.

Present Schools of Choice

Evidence of improvements in education had not been substantiated in information collected from other countries in which school choice had been implemented for the past few years. For example, the social experiment in New Zealand resulted in increased polarization of students by race and class and the abandonment of unsuccessful schools (Fiske & Ladd, 2000). As was predicted by opponents of deregulated parental choice systems, segregation by class and ethnicity increased because economic considerations and social status adversely affected the ability of some families to exercise choice.

Division in class within the community was also apparent in Britain as a result of the students no longer being required to attend the local community school with children of all economic and social classes interacting on a daily basis (Kuehn, 1995). Dobbin (1995) reported that nearly one fifth of local children were not admitted to the school of their choice because these popular schools were allowed to pick the students they wanted. He stated,

...this has meant a rapid development of social divisions as parents begin to identify more with their social class than with their neighbourhoods, communities or more broadly, democracy. Conservative strategists openly identify charter schools as a way of weaning people from their commitment to community and collective solutions, by

appealing to individualism—and what better place to put this temptation than with parents' concerns for the future of their children....Charter schools not only promote social division but perpetuate it by developing a system which will 'teach' it to the next generation. Charters not only affect education but also attack the values that led to public education in the first place. (p. 80)

The British grant-maintained system was based on a model of competition in the market place.

The assumption was that the value of education could be determined by consumer choice.

Consequently, significant attention was placed on selling, advertising, and promoting in order to recruit and retain pupils rather than, as recent studies indicated (Gewirtz & Ball, 1995), on educational program change. There was concern in Britain over the trend away from integrating children with special needs into the regular classroom. These students were seen as impediments in achieving test scores that could be used to comparison-market the school (Kuehn, 1995).

According to Willms and Echols (1992), the competition generated by parental choice might eliminate a small number of exceptionally ineffective schools, and impel a few others to enhance their curriculum and instruction, but the results for Scotland suggested, "that conditions for healthy competition are difficult to achieve. Parental choice in schooling is not likely to be the panacea that many hope for" (p. 348).

Also, one school district in California found that its choice program aimed at equalization actually increased disparities (Kuehn, 1995). Even in this situation, parents with the most resources took the most advantage of the situation for their children. In a society supposedly devoted to equality of opportunity, the concept of school choice raises deep issues about liberty versus equality, government versus market, and about our commitment to free and universal education. Education Week stated that the president of the United Teachers of Los Angeles

accused some charter schools of being 'cut-rate schools with false promises and lower standards. They (charter schools) should not be a cover for student segregation, exploitation, and privatization' (Kuehn, 1995).

Although it is premature, initial information in Texas implied that charter schools were "clearly no magic bullet for the problems of American education" (Fusarelli, 2001, p. 166).

If one were to believe the rhetoric of charter school accountability, one would expect a results-driven system. Fusarelli's case study of Texan charter schools suggested that, in reality, charter school accountability was driven by political considerations, as much, if not more so, than by student and program performance.

According to Carnoy (1998), the Chilean and Swedish cases suggested that unregulated school choice reforms failed to increase school quality or reduce public spending. He stated that even reducing teachers' collective bargaining power in Chile only served to "shift income from teachers to entrepreneurs" (p. 336). He concluded,

...not every income group benefits from increased choice. Less educated, lower income parents have less access to private alternatives....Better educated parents also tend to move their children out of schools with significant enrollment of lower-income, lower academically performing pupils when choice exists. (p. 335)

The New Zealand, British, Scottish, American, Swedish, and Chilean examples provide unmistakable evidence of class divisions created by deregulated school choice (Carnoy, 1998; Dobson, 1997; Fiske & Ladd, 2000; Kuehn, 1995; Willms & Echols, 1992). Sackney and Dibsiki (1994) warned about the likely result of applying the market model to the delivery of education when they wrote, "As in the market system, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer unless

there is some centralist intervention on the part of the governing authorities to provide adequately for the educational welfare of all pupils” (p. 108).

Therefore, the study closely examined the effects of a charter school in Calgary, Alberta on public education through the voices of participants representing both forms of educational delivery. Questions asked were derived from claims made by both sides of this micro debate. Proponents’ claims of increasing the diversity of schools and causing public schools to be more responsive to the wishes of parents were addressed. Because of the professed increased autonomy of charter schools, are our brightest and most innovative teachers opting to teach in charter schools? In addition, are opponents’ claims that charter schools drain public funds and cream public school’s highest achievers founded? Finally, are there lessons to be learned from this charter school that could increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Calgary public schools?

Summary

This chapter attempted to clearly state the macro argument put forth by libertarians and communitarians. Libertarians claim that individual choice is crucial for an effective and efficient society and should override any common good. Communitarians, conversely, profess that although individual rights are important they should never be superior to the collective good for society. It was shown that both sides of the macro debate affect the micro debate of how education should be delivered. Libertarians claim that utilizing the market model to deliver education through charter schools will improve a failing public education system. On the other hand, communitarians argue that public education, which according to them has been underfunded and blamed for problems not entirely of its making, should be strengthened. They fear that further individualizing society could lead to the disappearance of democracy where

there would be winners and losers determined by race and class. As with all debates, both sides claim they are right.

These claims were divided into internal and external claims. It was made very clear that this study only dealt with the external claims which are the ones that would affect public education. This chapter concluded with some examples of schools of choice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter various aspects of the procedures utilized to obtain and examine the data for the study are outlined. These include the general research design, the selection of schools, the selection of respondents, and the data collection and analysis procedures.

The described methodology was utilized to answer, in the context of the libertarian-communitarian debate, the following research questions:

1. **what impact does a charter school in Calgary, Alberta have on three selected public schools, in particular, and public schools in general, as perceived by participants?**
 - a) **proponents claim charter schools increase diversity of choice and responsiveness to the needs of parents and are more accountable,**
 - b) **opponents argue that charter schools adversely affect public schools financially, ‘cream’ off the better students, and are less accountable, and;**
2. **in that context, what can be learned from this charter school that could help to improve the public education system?**

General Research Design

In order to answer the research questions stated above, a case study approach using qualitative data was utilized. Qualitative research allowed for rich descriptions. Such research permitted the probing of the informant and the consequent adaptation of previous questions thus increased the possibility of collecting detailed information. According to Guba (1990), this approach required the researcher to become intimately involved: “She or he cannot be an

anthropological stranger, minimizing reactivity, eschewing reciprocity, or writing with an authorial voice” (p. 88). He stated further that qualitative research made it possible to develop more informed and sophisticated constructions held prior to the inquiry.

A case study is both a process of inquiry and the product of that inquiry (Stake, 2000). Case study research is “the in-depth study of a phenomenon [a charter school and its effects on public schools] in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 545). Donmoyer (1990) contended that case studies were capable of introducing us, through the eyes of researchers, to situations not normally accessible to us, and could contribute to the insight and solution to a local problem. Case studies, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) maintained, which varied in their complexity, were detailed investigations of one single subject.

A case study approach was particularly pertinent for this study since, in order to answer the questions of how a charter school affects selected public schools and what is to be learned from charter schools, the results of the descriptive, explanatory, evaluative elements of the approach (Gall et al., 1996) were utilized. However, as Wolcott (1994) argued, a case study should emphasize a thick description of the case over explaining or evaluating it. Gall et al. (1996) concurred when they wrote,

... the researcher attempts to depict a phenomenon and conceptualize it. A good depiction will provide what is called thick description of the phenomenon, that is, statements that re-create a situation and as much of its context as possible, accompanied by the meanings and intentions inherent in that situation....In creating thick description, the researcher looks for constructs that bring order to the descriptive data and that relate these data to other research findings in the literature. A construct is a concept that is

inferred from observed phenomena and that can be used to explain those phenomena....

Researchers also can add depth to their descriptions by searching for themes present in the phenomena. We define themes as salient, characteristic features of a case. (p. 549)

Gall et al. (1996) explained that providing explanations for the phenomena under study was the aim of some case study research. These explanations, known as patterns, showed that “one type of variation observed in a case study is systematically related to another observed variation. If the researcher does not claim that one variation has a causal effect on the other, we describe it as a relational pattern. If causality is claimed, it is a causal pattern” (p. 550). Sometimes case study research was conducted to make judgments about the phenomenon in question (Gall et al., 1996). Finally, Anderson (1990) contended that case study research was highly data based and strived for the same reliability, validity, and rigorousness as any good research and was “often generalizable” (p. 158).

Specific Methodology

The following section explains how the charter school and public schools were chosen to participate in this study, the composition of the respondents, how data was collected and analyzed, and the ideological and subjective predispositions of the researcher.

Selection of Schools

In order to answer the research questions, one charter school and three public schools were chosen to take part in this study. For reasons that will become apparent, the charter school was chosen first.

Charter School

The researcher had planned to contact all four charter schools situated in Calgary, Alberta by phone to ask them to provide him with the procedure for requesting their participation in the

study. Someone “in the know” in Calgary suggested that the researcher ask a specific charter school, that eventually participated, because it was considered to be one of the most successful. The researcher then contacted the charter school and it happily and willingly agreed to take part.

Public Schools

The Calgary Board of Education was contacted for information about the procedures for requesting permission for three of their schools to participate in the study. The researcher complied with CBE’s requests and was granted permission to talk to people within the system—board members, central office personnel, in-school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. The researcher was permitted by the charter school to go through its student cumulative files so that he could determine which public schools its students last attended. Three public schools chosen had the most students of all public schools in Calgary enrolled at the participating charter school. This list of public schools was reviewed with a central office official for confirmation. These schools were approached by the researcher and asked to take part in the study. The principals in these schools agreed to be interviewed and to see if teachers, students, and parents would be interested in being personally interviewed and/or being part of a focus group.

Selection of Respondents

In order to answer the research questions, a number of people were asked to take part in the study. From the charter school, the executive assistant to the board, a board member, the superintendent, the principal educator, the principal administrator, the associate principal, and three teachers, five parents, and five students agreed to participate. Four trustees, four central office personnel, three principals (one from each participating school), three teachers and six parents from each of the three public schools accepted an invitation to take part in the study.

Finally, a local representative of the Alberta Teachers' Association and an official from Alberta Learning were also interviewed. The number of individuals involved was extensive enough to ensure rigor but reasonable enough for the researcher to undertake.

Charter School

The researcher met with the executive assistant to the board and the principals to solicit the names of possible respondents. This cooperative effort on their part was invaluable for conducting this study.

Administrators. A Board member, the executive assistant to the Board, the superintendent, the principal educator, the principal administrator, and the associate principal were interviewed. Two of these individuals also participated in the adult focus group.

Teachers. Three teachers were interviewed. One of these teachers also took part in the adult focus group.

Parents. The researcher had hoped to interview at least six parents but settled for the five who eventually agreed to participate. The parents had a child enrolled in the charter school under investigation who was previously enrolled in a public school. Parents were asked for their addresses so that the researcher was able to send them the appropriate sections of the transcripts for their confirmation.

Students. The researcher requested six students for a focus group but ended up with five students from upper grades who willingly engaged in discussions about their school and public schools.

Public Schools

The researcher met with the school principals to solicit assistance in choosing appropriate teachers, parents, and students. He received complete cooperation from this group, without which the study would not have been possible.

Administrators. A Trustee, central office staff person, and three principals—one from each school participating in the study—were personally interviewed. Two of these principals participated in a focus group. The other school was represented by the vice-principal.

Teachers. Three teachers from each school volunteered to be personally interviewed.

Parents. Six parents from each school agreed to interviews.

Students. Five students from each of the two schools offering grade nine took part in focus groups.

Data Collection Procedures

Gall et al. (1996) maintained that data collection was emergent in case study because information gathered at one stage of the study often was used to determine ensuing data-collection activities. At the outset, the purpose and nature of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data and how the findings would be documented, the ethical procedures, and that they would be able to withdraw from the study at any time were carefully explained to all participants. Participants in the study were given a letter, which was read to them by the researcher at the beginning of each interview session, outlining the above. Included was a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of 18, a formal consent form was also given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants were asked to sign a consent form that contained a confidentiality clause.

Participants were informed that all information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions would be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions was requested by having participants sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants were involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others said during the focus group session was essential. Confidentiality and anonymity was ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the schools involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students were deleted from quotations.

The following documents were examined by the researcher: from XYZ Charter School: XYZ Charter which included the by-laws, handbook, educational plan, school policies; draft policies; the registration information booklet; Junior High Town Hall Summary Report, June 2001; and student cumulative folders. And from the public schools: the School Amendment Act, 2001; Calgary Board of Education Alternative Programs document; school annual reports and handbooks; and school development and renewal plans.

The researcher will tell the story as told to him by participants. He was clear with them at the outset that he was only planning to report their answers to his questions and what he read in school, Board, and government documents. At no time was he evaluating their programs or their staff, so prolonged observations were never intended.

Interviews

In order to gather views and information on the external effects of a charter school on selected public schools, interviews were conducted. The qualitative interview allowed the researcher a chance to comprehend research participants' accounts of their worlds as depicted in their own words (Mayan, 2001). The researcher utilized unstructured and semi-structured

interviews and focus groups. Intensive unstructured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following representatives of the charter school: three teachers, three in-school administrators, superintendent, board member, executive assistant to the board, and five parents. Similar interviews were carried out with the following individuals from the public school system: a trustee, a school administrator from each school, three teachers and six parents from each school, and a central office person. An Alberta Learning official and a local representative from the Alberta Teachers' Association were also interviewed.

During the unstructured interview process, participants were asked a general question and encouraged to tell their story or talk about their experiences while the researcher listened and learned. This provided participants the opportunity to talk about the effects of a charter school on public schools that may not have been found in the literature. The role of the interviewer, according to Mayan (2001), was, in a nonthreatening manner, to keep the interview on track and to test emerging hypothesis.

After the participants appeared to finish talking about the topic in general, semi-structured interviews were utilized to assist them to zero in on some important reported effects. The strength of semi-structured interviews was that they helped to insure that similar data were sought from all informants, while permitting flexibility on the part of the researcher, thus supporting the probing aspect of the intensive interview. A list of questions drawn from the literature review was prepared in advance and asked in a specific order. All participants in the interviews signed a Data/Transcript Release Form (Appendix C) to indicate that they had an opportunity to review the interview data, that they acknowledged that the data reflected what they said, and that they had authorized its release to the researcher.

Focus Groups

In order to gather views and information on the external effects of a charter school on selected public schools, both adult and student focus groups were conducted with five to seven participants in each. One adult focus group was conducted with a Board member, two in-school administrators, two parents, and one teacher from the charter school under investigation as was one student focus group with five members. Three adult focus groups, with different combinations of five of trustees, central office staff, in-school administrators, teachers, and parents, were conducted with representatives from public schools. Students from the two public schools with Grade Nine formed focus groups—five students from each school. Interaction amongst participants rather than between participants and the researcher was emphasized (Mayan, 2001). The role of the researcher was to initiate the discussion.

Before the researcher conducted the interviews and focus groups, he met with decision-makers from the charter school and public schools under investigation to explain the purpose of the study and to garner their consent. All interviewees and focus group members signed consent forms (Appendix C) prior to being interviewed. All interviews and focus groups, which lasted between 45 to 60 minutes and were conducted when convenient for participants, were audio-taped. Partial transcripts were sent to all participants that were clearly marked confidential. They were requested to respond by a certain date after which time the researcher considered the information contained in the transcripts to be accurate. This was clearly explained, in writing, to the interviewees.

Instrumentation

Questions were developed from the literature review carried out on charter schools and their effects on public schools. Although the literature review examined both the internal and the

external effects of charter schools, this particular investigation was solely interested in peoples' perceptions of the external effects a charter school had on certain public schools. External effects were claimed as positive by proponents of school choice while negative effects were expressed by opponents of school choice. The positive effects included increasing the diversity of schools and making public schools more responsive to parents' wishes. Accompanying negative effects, as espoused by detractors of unregulated school choice, were that charter schools would drain funds from public schools, "cream off" the best students from public schools, and attract the most creative and energetic teachers. Questions found in Appendix A were the core questions utilized in this study. However, questions continued to evolve during the course of the study.

The researcher was satisfied with the amount of "rich" data he collected. He followed the criteria set by Lincoln and Guba [In Merriam (1998)] for determining when he had sufficient data to proceed with the study: exhaustion of resources, saturation of categories, emergence of regularities, and over-extension.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, a process of making sense out of the data (Merriam, 1998), did not commence at a particular moment. It began with data collection as the two simultaneously shaped the final product (Merriam, 1998). Data dealt with in this manner was both "parsimonious" and "illuminating". Stake (1995) contended that analysis, which essentially means taking something apart, entailed assigning "meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations" (p. 71). He argued that writing in a way that contributes to the reader's understanding of the case should be the main goal of reporting a case study. Also, Merriam (1998) argued that there was not only one way to analyze stories collected by researchers.

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis. During interviews and focus groups, he sought common themes which emerged as: diversity, responsiveness, accountability, equity, financial, students, teachers—the use of scripts and inability to belong to the ATA, special education, streaming, direct instruction, discipline, parental involvement and control, and libertarianism versus communitarianism. The structured component was analyzed in order to ascertain whether or not the espoused effects were manifest in the eyes of the participants. Since the micro debate being analyzed is related to the macro libertarian-communitarian debate, attention was paid to narrative research so that responses could be connected to the macro debate. It was hoped that the macro debate would be furthered as a result of this study. The researcher attempted, as was suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), to relate the outcomes of other cases to his case so as “to understand how they [were] qualified by local conditions, and thus develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” (p. 172). Research on school choice programs world-wide informed the analysis of data collected for this study.

Validity

Merriam (1998) wrote of two types of validity: internal validity—how research findings match reality, and external validity—generalization. Since reality could never be grasped, according to him, validity needed to be assessed in other terms. What was reported were people’s constructions of reality—how they viewed the world. Anderson (1990) argued that internal validity was enhanced through a case study because a case study incorporated a chain of evidence that he explained as a way of presenting “the data in a tight and interconnected way so that the reader can follow the evidence and come to the same conclusion” (p. 163). Therefore,

according to Anderson (1990), a case study that attempted to understand the studied situation automatically strove for internal validity.

Although validity was difficult to achieve, Wolcott (1990) alleged that the implicit challenge of validity could be satisfied. Researchers should talk little and listen a lot, record participants' words as accurately as possible, be candid, and strive for balance, fairness, completeness, and sensitivity. The validity of this case study was enhanced by using multiple methods to collect data through a process called triangulation (Gall et al., 1996; Lancy, 1993; Stake, 2000). As stated earlier, one of the reasons for conducting focus groups was to determine consistency among participants' comments. Walcott (1990) contended that triangulation should not be overdone. He argued that researchers were better off reminding readers that they were reporting what they were told by informants, which might or might not be totally correct, and that it was quite possible for researchers to report unchecked facts or claims. Another method of increasing validity, according to Gall et al. (1996), was member checking which would point out errors and discrepancies that were easily corrected. They further maintained that participants, because of different perceptions attained by reading and thinking about the account, were able to contribute new facts. Consequently, adjustments would be possible. All participants who were individually interviewed as part of the study signed Data/Transcript Forms (Appendix C) to indicate that they had an opportunity to review the interview data to ensure accuracy and to release the data to the researcher. Validity was also strengthened, according to Gall et al. (1996), by performing an audit on tape recorded data. Transcripts from individual interviews and focus groups were provided to a colleague for the purpose of corroborating the themes as reported by the researcher.

Kirby and McKenna's (1989) definition of validity was: "For our research to be valid, we must be able to say that what we describe is recognized by the research participants as so" (p. 36). Qualitative research was very much an interactive process capable of producing credible and dependable findings that demonstrate that the researcher's conclusion "makes sense" (Merriam, 1998). A researcher's findings were more believable and trustworthy when they have been grounded in supporting detail—rich data. The researcher heeded Merriam (1998) who insisted that for qualitative research to be valid the investigation had to be conducted in an ethical manner. The researcher, also on Merriam's advice, paid particular attention to the conceptualization of the study, the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, and the presentation of the findings. This would enhance validity.

Generalizability

According to Merriam (1998), the most often discussed aspect of qualitative research was generalization, which he also referred to as external validity. Generalizability was not as attainable as findings spawned by quantitative research because efforts at understanding were neither underwritten with, nor ensured by, the amassing of some foreordained level of verified facts (Walcott, 1990). No two sets of findings by two qualitative researchers were likely to be the same (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) mainly because of the personal bias of the researcher. All researchers collected information discriminatingly. Wolcott (1994) elegantly wrote about generalization as an epistemological issue when he stated,

Most certainly we need to demonstrate how our cases contribute to some larger picture....

I am inclined to treat generalization as something highly desirable yet always beyond grasp.... Whatever can be learned from a well-contextualized study of a single case is the contribution that each of those studies has to offer.... I make few generalizations,

implicate a few more, and leave the readers the challenge of making further ones depending on their present concerns and prior experiences. (pp. 171-172)

Denzin (1989) stated that “all interpretations are unfinished, provisional, and incomplete” (p. 64). Merriam (1998) claimed that the general lied in the particular—“what we learn in a particular situation we can transfer or generalize to similar situations subsequently encountered” (p. 209). Although he admitted that generalizations based on one case were difficult, Anderson (1990) maintained that lessons could be learned from case studies which had “potential generalizability to other situations and settings” (p. 163). It was the duty of others to discard, alter, and redefine the findings, interpretations, and conclusions of the researcher (Peshkin, 2000). The reader must examine the study to determine what was applicable to his or her own situation and what was irrelevant. Patton (1990) [In Merriam (1998)] argued that qualitative research should “provide perspective rather than truth, empirical assessment of local decision makers’ theories of action rather than generation and verification of universal theories, and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations” (p. 209). It may not always lead to a theory, but it was apt to inform us and cause us to reconsider our beliefs about phenomena under investigation. According to Stake (1995), finishing a case study was a work of art.

The Researcher

Because case study research was capable of so much, it was the preferred method of the researcher for collecting and reporting research findings. From the selection of the questions for the first interviews to the data recorded by the researcher to the selection of particular quotations, the work written will bear the mark of the researcher’s own ideological and subjective predispositions. The researcher is firmly committed to a just, fair, equitable, and democratic society. He thinks it is important to look at all issues with a critical eye, always asking the

question of who benefits at whose expense. Further, he argues that society will be, and should be, judged on how it treated its weakest members. Consequently, he is very concerned with diminishing democracy and mounting corporate control. There is every attempt to control any perception of bias by quoting directly from the participants—not paraphrasing their words. Although the researcher had a hunch about how the study would turn out, he was careful to not allow these hunches or above biases to influence the outcome of the study. He made every attempt to be fair and just.

Ethics Approval

Throughout the investigation, an effort was made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participated. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research (Appendix D) were followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback.

Summary

The preceding chapter presented the methodology utilized for this study. The researcher explained why he chose a qualitative case study approach and stated the advantages of this method. It was shown how schools and participants were selected for the study. Data was collected through interviews and focus groups and from documents. The researcher chose to thematically analyze data obtained from participants and documents.

It is hoped that readers will confirm the internal validity of this study by following the evidence and arriving at the same conclusions. Validity was enhanced by utilizing many methods of collecting data, through triangulation, member checking, and a tape recorded data audit. The researcher strived for validity by reporting what he heard from participants. Although

generalizability is highly desirable, it is not absolutely necessary. The researcher presented perspective rather than truth and will leave it up to others to draw their own conclusions.

Through the study, he was permitted to advocate for a fair and equitable world.

Finally, the researcher offered his beliefs and admitted to a certain bias. This, however, did not prevent him from telling what he heard and read.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to answer the following questions: what impact does a charter school in Calgary, Alberta have on selected public schools, and, in that context, what can be learned from this charter school that could help to improve the public education system? Data were gathered by utilizing qualitative research methodology and involved personal interviews and focus groups. A document analysis was also performed on school, Board, and provincial materials. What follows is a reporting and summary of the interview and focus group data according to the questions asked of the participants. A thematic analysis is conducted on the collected data. The themes were gleaned from the transcripts and emerged as: diversity, responsiveness, accountability, equity, financial, students, teachers—the use of scripts and inability to belong to the ATA, special education, streaming, direct instruction, discipline, parental involvement and control, and libertarianism versus communitarianism.

The researcher first reports and summarizes data gathered at the charter school where he interviewed a board member, the superintendent, executive assistant to the board, and three in-school administrators. Three teachers and five parents were also interviewed. Two focus groups were conducted: one with adult representatives that included parents, board members, school administrators, and a teacher; the other was with five Grade Nine students.

The data collected at the three participating public schools is treated similarly. The researcher interviewed a board member, a central office administrator, and from each of three schools one administrator, three teachers, and six parents. A focus group was held with adult constituents from each school. One was composed of two parents, one teacher, an in-school

administrator, a central office staff, and a trustee—the preferred composition. However, two teachers, an in-school administrator, a central office staff, and a trustee—no parents—participated in a focus group while the members of the third group were two parents, a teacher, an in-school administrator, and a trustee—no central office staff. All focus groups provided added insights into the charter school phenomenon. Focus groups conducted with Grade Nine students at the two schools that offered Grade Nine also provided a perspective. One student focus group involved four out of the five students who agreed to participate. The other student focus group was comprised of all five student volunteers. The personal interviews and focus groups pointed to the need for more discussion about charter schools before they expand. The researcher compares what parents, teachers, and administrators from both systems had to say in answer to the questions posed to them. The chapter includes a comparison of findings between XYZ and CBE keeping in mind the communitarian-libertarian debate.

Charter School

In the following sections the charter school under investigation is described and the answers to questions posed to participants by the researcher are reported according to the themes mentioned above.

Description of the Charter School

XYZ Charter School signed a charter with The Minister of Education for the period of March 20, 1997 to June 30, 2002. It had two campuses: one campus served students from ECS to Grade 4 while the other, the subject of this study, served Grade 5-9 students. The campus under investigation had 17 full-time equivalent teachers with one-year renewable contracts dependent upon favourable performance appraisals. XYZ had an administration structure composed of a full-time Executive Assistant to the Board, .4 Superintendent shared with the

other campus, a principal educator, a principal administrator, and .6 associate principal. The school superintendent informed me that he was employed by XYZ Charter School because of a requirement of the School Act. He was responsible to the Charter School Board, Calgary Public School System, and to Alberta Learning. The Monitoring Authority was Alberta Learning, which evaluated the program but offered no assistance.

Students had come from 124 Public, Catholic, Charter, and Private Schools from the Calgary region and from homeschooling arrangements. They were transported by 18 buses for a \$400 per student (\$1000 per family maximum) yearly fee. Three percent of the students had arrived from four other Charter Schools; 9 percent of the students from 12 private schools; and 10 percent from 19 Catholic schools. Most students, 68 percent, attending XYZ Charter School at the time of the study, had left 88 public schools. Each of the 88 schools lost on average 2.3 children. However, one school lost 12 students while two lost seven each, one lost six, and three lost five. Six percent of the students were home-schooled prior to enrolling. There was no previous record of prior school attended for 4 percent of the students.

XYZ had an enrollment of 299 (100 students in Grade 5 and 50 in each of the other grades). There were 5300 people on the waiting list as of May 1, 2002. The mission of XYZ Charter School was to enable average ability students to meet future global challenges. The maximum class size was 25. Students were streamed by ability and there could be movement between the streams determined by regular testing. XYZ Charter School stated in its DRAFT Student Admissions Policy that it

is not required under the School Act or its Charter to provide programs for special needs students since these programs are not required to fulfill its Charter. There will be no systematic attempt to provide individualized learning or personalized instructional

programs. Therefore, parents of students experiencing difficulties will be encouraged to seek appropriate remedial help.

Parents were required to sign commitment forms that stated their responsibilities such as to support XYZ's goals, philosophy, policies, rules, regulations, and staff, attend parent meetings, ensure their children wear uniforms, and volunteer their time where needed. A Board member stated that the board discussed the culture of the school, what it should look like, and what they wanted for their children. It decided that the culture of the school should be decided by the principal because that was why he was hired.

The aim of the XYZ program, according to the Educational Plan section of the XYZ Charter School Charter, "would be to attract average families with average children" (p. K-1). "A charter school as part of the public system of schools complements the educational services provided by local schools and is not intended to duplicate them" (p. K-1). Section 29 of the Alberta School Act stated that students with special needs must be provided with appropriate educational services. This did "not apply to charter schools since that responsibility is already delegated to local school boards" (p. K-1). "We don't offer any special ed programs, so we don't have any students who are on IPPs or anything like that" (Charter School Administrator 2).

In the Demographics section of the charter it stated that "Registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis...(however) precedence will be given to those prospective students whose siblings are already in the program...exceptions will be made for students transferring from another school with the identical or compatible program (p. L-1)." In the DRAFT Student Admissions Policy it also made exceptions for students whose parents had been transferred out of Calgary and transferred back for business reasons. These students would be placed behind

siblings on the waiting list and did not go to the bottom with other students who withdrew for other reasons of necessity.

Reporting Data on Question of Changes in General

QUESTIONS: What changes do you think have been brought about in CBE schools by the existence of XYZ Charter School? Do you think this charter school has been in existence long enough to determine what changes it has brought about in CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Before asking participants about specific changes to CBE schools caused by XYZ, the researcher asked the general question about changes to see if there were reasons in addition to those cited. Responses from parents, teachers, administrators, and adult and student focus groups are reported below.

Parents

One parent spoke strongly about the main change brought about in public schools was that CBE was planning to open up a school modeled after XYZ Charter School. “But behind this was the fact that XYZ wanted a certain building and now we learn that it’s that building, that the CBE wants for the XYZ copycat, which I think is criminal, power lusting politics of the worst kind” (Charter School Parent 5).

A parent thought that at this point in time there had been no change in CBE schools. “I see the public school system here is a dinosaur and you’re not going to see sudden changes in a dinosaur, but I do see awakenings in a dinosaur, I do see the dinosaur sort of turning his head and sort of acknowledging that we exist, that we may not be all bad” (CSP1).

Another popular reply was that XYZ had caused CBE to reevaluate its role. “For our public schools in particular, I think its sort of an awakening that there are other methodologies

and other ways to teach kids. That they are not the be all and end all” (CSP1). Another parent stated:

I think they [Calgary Board of Education] basically got a wake-up call. The Board of Education doesn't like these charter schools. They've demonstrated they don't like them; the charter schools are taking their students away and they had to wake up and respond. They had to start listening to the parents instead of just listening to the teachers unions and all the special interest groups and bureaucrats. (CSP5)

One parent thought that charter schools had “raised the bar” (CSP2) in education delivery. Also, one parent stated that CBE was feeling threatened by charter schools.

It's a political power game. They recognize that this is a threat to their power base. And it's a major threat when you think about all the special interests behind it; you know they're worried. They don't like it. And they have demonstrated they will do whatever they can to stop these charters. And in our case they are not letting us have school buildings. (CSP5)

Teachers

Two teachers who were interviewed mentioned the planned opening of a copycat school by CBE as the most significant change brought about in the public schools. One teacher stated that charter schools have had no effect on public schools. “I'm not sure that changes have been made as of yet” (Charter School Teacher 2). Two teachers maintained that public school officials had started to talk about alternatives and change. “I think just the dialogue that's happening (is an example of change)” (CST1). One teacher stated that XYZ Charter School had not been around long enough to bring about changes in CBE. Another teacher disagreed with this assertion. “I guess it has (been around long enough). It's in its 5th year now and based on

the waiting list (5300 as of Jan. 31, 2002) and the reports in the media, it's turning some heads" (CST3). One teacher offered that charter schools were having a financial effect on public schools. "...what CBE doesn't like is that it's a threat to their population if we take some of their students, maybe they don't get some of the funding" (CST3).

Administrators

Four administrators stated the fact that the CBE was planning to open a school similar to XYZ was proof of change in CBE caused by XYZ's existence. One stated that "...mimicking and imaging is the ultimate flattery...(and)...they (CBE) announced this copycat school. So that was for me, one of the happiest moments in the last 5 or 6 years" (Charter School Administrator 5). Two administrators stated that they did not think that individual public schools had been affected, that the effects were being felt at the public school board level. According to two administrators, charter schools have had no effect on public schools. "So I have given you some evidence that we are not affecting the public, I'm just putting it straight on the line as I see it" (CSA5). Although they both thought that public schools would change.

I think it [charter schools] will change the face of education—[it] has to because it's already made people pay attention. The fact that you're here says something. It's making people pay attention. I mean, you're from Saskatchewan and you're here and it's making people stand up and look and say, where's it going next. And scared, scared to death. (CSA4)

One administrator thought that charter schools had caused the public school system to take a look at what they were doing. "I think it's made them reevaluate" (CSA4). Two administrators maintained that XYZ Charter School had not been in existence long enough to bring about changes in public schools.

Focus Groups

The adult group reinforced the opinion that the most glaring example of change in CBE was its opening of a “copycat school”. It agreed that public school officials had started to talk about alternatives and change and that this was proof of change. The idea that CBE was perceived to be under self-examination was confirmed by the adult focus group. The adult focus group agreed that CBE had not been cooperative. “I think to some extent we’re a bit of an ideological threat to the CBE because we have been able to succeed in certain quarters” (Charter School Focus Group). Another adult stated, “It’s [charter schools] definitely had an effect on public schools, cause it’s kind of making them jealous in ways, cause we’re always on the news...” (CSFG). A member of the adult focus group agreed with the assertion that the CBE was financially concerned.

I think the motives [for self-examination], though, are less than pure and I think the reason for that self-examination is basically financially and driven by the desire not to lose kids and to maintain their size and power that they have, not necessarily that they think there’s alternatives or better ways of educating students. (CSFG)

A member of the group contended that “CBE has been losing about 1.3% market share a year for the last 7 years” (CSFG). A participant stated, “That, I think is forcing them to consider what they have to do to get their market share back in order to manage their financial situations, the financial difficulties that result from the loss of market share” (CSFG).

Students also agreed that Calgary Public’s opening of a copycat school was the biggest proof that CBE was changing. The student focus group agreed with a statement made by a person who was individually interviewed about charter schools raising the bar in education. As

well, one student from the focus group declared that public schools were jealous of charter schools.

Summary

The most common example given of the changes made by CBE because of XYZ was the announcement by CBE stating that it planned to open a school modeled after XYZ. Nine of the 14 people interviewed and both the adult and student focus groups supported this opinion. According to four individuals and the adult focus group, CBE may not have been changing yet but it would change. Proof of this, insisted four participants, was the fact that CBE was evaluating its programs. One administrator was not convinced that charter schools would be given the support they deserved. “One concern that I have that might limit the impact that we could have is a lack of political will to see us through.... I think there is a lot of public pressure even at the governmental level to see...charter schools fail” (CSA2).

Diversity

QUESTION: Do you think that the presence of this charter school has affected the diversity of schools for students to choose from? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

All those participating in personal interviews were asked if they thought that there was more diversity in CBE because of charter schools, in general, and XYZ in particular.

Parents

All of the five parents interviewed were convinced that there was now more diversity for parents because of the existence of charter schools. The only reason for this (more diversity) was “the success of this charter school” (CSP3).

Teachers

The three teachers agreed that there was more diversity for parents since XYZ was established. One teacher stated that the fact CBE was talking about offering different options to parents (CST1) was a step in the right direction.

Administrators

Five administrators interviewed stated that, thanks to XYZ, there was more diversity for parents in Calgary. "...just the existence of our school has increased diversity..." (CSA3).

Focus Groups

Because of the unanimous response during individual interviews from XYZ Charter School representatives that charter schools had caused more diversity of choice, the researcher placed the question near the end of the focus group session and, consequently, did not get to it. However, both the adult and student focus groups concluded that there was more diversity and pointed to the proposed opening of CBE's Traditional Learning Centre, modeled after XYZ, as proof.

Summary

There was no question among those interviewed as to whether or not XYZ Charter School had caused diversity. It was unanimous among all people interviewed that schools like XYZ would flourish if CBE stayed rigid in its thinking. So, either way, parents and students, according to charter school interviewees, would have more choice in the city of Calgary.

Responsiveness

QUESTION: Do you think that the presence of this charter school has affected the responsiveness of CBE schools to the needs of parents. Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Interviewees were asked whether or not they thought that, because of XYZ, CBE schools were more responsive to the needs and desires of parents.

Parents

Parents held various views. Two parents thought that the public school system was more responsive. However, one parent questioned the sincerity of CBE. “I don’t know if it’s sincere, I hope it’s sincere, but I don’t think so. If you’re losing students, you’re going to get pressure from people above to do something about it, and obviously if parents aren’t happy then one of the things you have to do is go out and talk to parents” (CSP5). One parent provided an example of the lack of responsiveness he/she encountered. “We’ve been trying to get an interview with one of the teachers (this parent has a son in a public school) for over a week and haven’t had a phone call back” (CSP3). Finally, two parents maintained that responsiveness was situational. “I think it all depends on the administration within the school” (CSP2).

Teachers

All three teachers who participated in the study had different opinions. One stated yes, another felt “that hasn’t occurred yet, however, I do see them starting to try to make that change. So far, as far as I am aware, nothing has changed in their schools” (CST2), and one was unsure “because I only have one point of view from this school” (CST3).

Administrators

Five administrators were convinced that public schools were more responsive now than in the past. The motives of CBE were questioned. “I think now they recognize that to get the dollars back and to satisfy the public, they had better start being responsive” (CSA1). Another administrator claimed “...we’re causing the responsiveness” (CSA4).

Focus Groups

Again the quality of discussion during individual interviews permitted me to place a discussion around responsiveness low on the list of questions. Time did not allow me to cover this topic. However, in answering the question about changes in general, one member of the adult focus group stated that public schools are reevaluating themselves. It was hoped that CBE schools would become more responsive because they were losing students.

Summary

Although it was not unanimous, eight of the 13 individuals interviewed felt that CBE schools were more responsive because of the existence of XYZ. The motives of CBE were questioned. It was thought by some of those interviewed that CBE was becoming more responsive because they were losing students to the competition, and not because they really cared what parents had to say. Two people stated that public schools were not more responsive. Three interviewees were unsure. Two parents thought that some schools within CBE were more responsive, but did not know whether or not all public schools had changed their approach to addressing parents' needs and desires.

Financial

QUESTION: Do you think that this charter school has had a financial effect on CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

All interviewees were asked if they thought that charter schools had a financial effect on public schools.

Parents

Two out of five parents stated that charter schools had a financial effect on public schools. Three parents thought that charter schools had no financial effect on public schools. "I

think they're actually making a profit because of the lease agreement (for the building)" (CSP3).

Besides, according to one parent "[t]hey [public schools] don't deserve the money they get.

They get it by force. They have abused money a lot over the years, as far as I am concerned"

(CSP5).

Teachers

Two out of three teachers maintained that XYZ had a financial effect on CBE schools.

Administrators

Four out of six administrators stated that charter schools had a financial effect on public schools. "Students equal dollars and the students were going elsewhere" (CSA1). Another

administrator added, "...we've got 800 students that could have been CBE students" (CSA2).

Finally, one administrator was unsure. "No I haven't thought about that [financial effect] and I don't know what to answer to that, really" (CSA3).

Focus Groups

Members of the adult focus group felt that charter schools were having a financial effect on public schools. One participant stated that "[t]hey [CBE] only lose that market share when there are other opportunities. And for a long time they've [CBE] been trying to keep the other opportunities away like home schooling and charter schools" (CSFG).

Summary

Eight of the 14 individuals interviewed admitted that charter schools had a financial effect on public schools. This opinion was supported by the adult focus group. Four participants argued that public schools had not been financially affected by charter schools while one person was unsure.

Accountability

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ is more accountable than, less accountable than, or similarly accountable to CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Those participating in the study through personal interviews were quizzed about accountability. They were asked whether XYZ was more or less accountable than CBE schools or similarly accountable.

Parents

Two of five parents interviewed felt that charter schools were more accountable than public schools. The three other parents were unsure about the difference, if any, in accountability.

Teachers

Two out of three teachers contended that charter schools were more accountable than public schools. One parent argued that charter schools were

...more accountable because we're smaller, because we are constantly watched and have to be renewed in five years. I don't know of a Calgary public school that can be closed down by anybody....You could run as poor a school as you want, and maybe they would shift principals and stuff, but that's it. They're not going to take away your school. So we're accountable that way....Plus, since our charter, and all charter schools, have written in there, that they welcome the parents, you can't shut them out. And some [CBE] schools and some administrations in [CBE] schools do not welcome parents telling them how to run their show. (CST3)

One teacher thought that XYZ and CBE schools were similarly accountable. “Equally accountable, more scrutinized, because we [XYZ] are by nature, different than a public school, we have to prove our results” (CST1).

Administrators

Of the six administrators interviewed, four thought that charter schools were more accountable than public schools. One administrator offered:

We are always under the threat of our charter being revoked or not being re-approved or renewed and I think that makes us pretty motivated to make sure that we meet the standard that we said we would meet. We have to show what kind of progress we’re making on our goals and our promises basically, we have to fulfill them and I don’t know that too many public schools have to do that. So I would say we are more accountable.
(CSA1)

Another administrator stated that they “...put these reports in directly to the government and they have special evaluators who are former deputy ministers coming in and making these evaluations” (CSA3). One administrator felt both were similarly accountable. “...we are pretty well the same” (CSA5).

Focus Groups

The adult focus group agreed with the majority of people interviewed. “The government has put charter schools under a lot more accountability that they’re holding the CBE to” (CSFG). A member also argued that

[t]hey [public schools] spend so much energy resisting accountability and results....

Realize their system’s not producing, so spend all their energy justifying why they don’t have results. What a waste of energy and time. I wish they would all get a more cheerful

disposition and square up their shoulders a little more, get a little better work ethic, stop complaining so much, try to work with what they've got. (CSFG)

Summary

Eight of the 14 participants were convinced that charter schools were more accountable than public schools. This sentiment was echoed by the adult focus group. The main reasons given were that charters had to be re-approved every five years and that charter schools were evaluated by competent individuals. Two people thought that public and charter schools were similarly accountable and three were unsure of the difference if it existed.

Students

QUESTION: What types of students attend XYZ? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Interviewees were asked what types of students were enrolled at XYZ Charter School.

Parents

All five parents were convinced that XYZ was attended by average children—not requiring special services. One parent maintained that

We've got kids from all walks of life. We've got kids with huge families, we've got kids with small families. We've got kids that I know personally that their parents are barely making ends meet, so you know, their lunches are pretty iffy, you know, can we make it from one month to the next, and there are other families here that are large families whose parents are doctors and lawyers. (CSP1)

Although one parent thought that the school attracted extremes—frustrated above-average students and those that were struggling. "...we do have high achieving students here, but we have kids that struggle too" (CSP4). Three parents stated that the school had its share of at-risk

children. Finally, three parents pointed out the ethnic mix of the school. “We’ve got the whole ethnic group mix, we’ve got Chinese, we’ve got Japanese, we’ve got Hindu, we’ve got Muslims, we’ve got...” (CSP1).

Teachers

Two of the teachers stated that the school population was composed of average children.

“...it’s average students” (CST1). One teacher explained:

We do entry assessments that are just making sure that they are coming in on an average level. It’s very difficult for students to come in if they are more than a year behind in their skills, so that’s kind of what we’re looking for. We do not have programs that are available for special needs kids, that’s not what we do. We are able to do that because we are charter. (CST1)

However, one thought that the school was made up of students from two extremes:

...we take those kids who have huge gaps in their learning and somehow we’re supposed to fix it all. Then we have the parents who are really concerned and want a structured environment and a safe kind of character place to get an education. They really care and are concerned, so they send their kids here. (CST3)

Two contended that children at risk attended XYZ. Two were convinced that students who attended had parents who were concerned and wanted the best education for their children. The diverse ethnic population of the school was noted by two of the teachers. When asked why students left, one teacher stated that, “I know we’ve lost some students who find the pace very difficult to keep up with” (CST1).

Administrators

Five administrators who were interviewed maintained that XYZ Charter School had been attended by average children who all had parents that cared about their children's education. "So, generally though, we don't get a lot of students that are really, really, really below average" (CSA2). According to one administrator, "They (parents) are conservative by nature. They are often people who have maintained their religious roots" (CSA3). Also, another administrator maintained that students come "from cultural backgrounds where their parents are used to a more structured environment, you know, they may be first generation Canadians, and they may be used to a different environment" (CSA4). Two even felt that some children were forced to attend by their parents. One claimed that "you get kind of, you know, the prisoners whose parents force them to come here..." (CSA2). The other contended that "I don't have the sense that most of the students here have made this choice" (CSA3). One administrator argued that many students were at both extremes—frustrated above-average students and struggling students. "I would say basically there are 2...one group being the group whose parents are very focused on education...the other group I see is a group of parents who are at their wits end as to what to do regarding their child's lack of achievement in an unstructured situation" (CSA1). Two of the five noted the presence of at-risk students. One claimed that "...we get students that haven't been horribly successful and are looking to be rescued or at least their parents are looking for the magic pill, the Savior, someone to come in and fix what the public school has done to my kid" (CSA2). Four mentioned the ethnic nature of the school. "It looks like United Nations in here. There's kids of every breed, nationality, color you can imagine in here" (CSA5). When asked if students were turned down one administrator stated:

We have families that chose not to take that [being placed in a grade, determined by an entrance exam, lower than when in the public system], so I guess they are getting discouraged from coming here, but we are not necessarily doing the discouraging, we are just trying to place them academically where they are suited to be. (CSA2)

When one administrator was asked how people found out about XYZ, the answer was that “Maybe parents that can afford to have their kids play hockey or soccer are ones that are telling each other. I really don’t know. Hard for me to say” (CSA1).

Focus Groups

The adult focus group members were mostly in agreement with answers to questions posed to individual interviewees. According to the focus group, XYZ Charter School was made up of average children. It acknowledged the fact that there were also students at-risk attending the school. According to one participant, some students attended “whose parents have gotten to their wits end about what to do because they have not been learning and they’ve not been provided with an environment that helps them learn and are now, have now lost time in a system that hasn’t taught them anything” (CSFG). There was also talk of how the parents who sent their children to XYZ cared about their children’s education. Also noted was the ethnic make up of the school. “The other thing that hasn’t been said is that there seem to be certain cultural or religious groups that have a network and a focus on education that seem to have networked together and decided that this school might be a good place to go...” (CSFG). The fact that some children are discouraged from enrolling at XYZ Charter School was mentioned.

And for those children [designated special needs], we basically tell them we have no mandate to provide those services. This is probably not the place for your child. There

are other programs that are being offered to handle your child and your children would probably be better suited in those other programs. (CSFG)

One of the students participating in the student focus group stated that “there’s definitely a difference between the students that go here [XYZ Charter School] and the kids that go there [public schools]...cause we know how to respect people here” (Charter School Student Focus Group). When asked if they knew of a student that applied and was refused entry, one student offered that “(m)y friend applied but didn’t get in” (CSSFG). When other students tried to tell him that his friend was probably put on the waiting list for a lower grade, he answered that “...he’s not below grade level, he’s smart...” (CSSFG). Another student thought that XYZ Charter School accepted most kids “but sometimes there might be just a few things, too many bad things going on that they might not want to bring in that kid cause it might influence the school badly...” (CSSFG).

Summary

The agreement on a description for the type of student attending XYZ was high. All but one of the individuals interviewed maintained that average kids attended their school. Both adult and student focus groups agreed. The ethnic diversity of the school was attested to by nine participants and the adult focus group. Seven of the interviewees stated that some children at risk attended the school. This was supported by the student focus group. Another seven people claimed that parents of XYZ students cared about their children’s education; two even contended that some children were forced to attend by their parents.

Teachers

QUESTIONS: What types of teachers are attracted to working at XYZ? What do you think about XYZ teachers using scripted lessons? Is this an attack on teacher

professionalism? Do you think that not belonging to a union will affect what teachers apply and stay at XYZ? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answers.

The researcher asked all participants what type of teacher was likely to be found at XYZ.

Parents

When asked what types of teachers were teaching their children, parents used many descriptors. One parent thought that the teachers were open-minded. Three described teachers as young. “..most of our teachers are fairly young” (CSP1). Two parents stated that some of the teachers were there simply because they needed a job. “I think you get a lot of new teachers—probably just looking for a job” (CSP3), although one parent disagreed with this reason. Two parents described the teachers as excellent. “we seem to have an excellent caliber of teacher” (CSP4). Of the five parents interviewed, two thought many teachers were at XYZ Charter School because they were dissatisfied with the public school system. “I think there’s some teachers who are disenchanted with the normal (public) system” (CSP3). The view that teachers at XYZ were there because they were committed to the charter philosophy was held by three of the five parents. “...they like the philosophy and that’s why they are here” (CSP5). Three parents maintained that teachers might not apply or leave because they have no union protection. One believed this to be a non-issue while one parent was not sure. On the issue of teachers reading from scripts as part of their instructional plan one parent contended that this was an attack on the professionalism of a teacher:

I think the teacher should be free to change the script if he thinks he can improve on it...that’s up to them to decide whether or not they want to change in the script. But it is a problem if the teacher hasn’t the freedom to make an improvement on something, if he or she can see the improvement. (CSP5)

Three parents felt otherwise. “I don’t think it hinders anybody. I think it’s a tool and i[f] done well, you’ve got your kids on tap” (CSP1).

Teachers

All three teachers interviewed felt that teachers taught at XYZ Charter School because they supported its philosophy. “I chose to work at this charter school because it is a school that has the same kind of philosophy that I do” (CST1) and “...what I liked about this school was that it had a structured way of teaching” (CST3). Two of the three teachers maintained that another reason for teachers teaching at XYZ was that they were dissatisfied with the public system. “...frustrated with a system that doesn’t value them” (CST1). “Charter schools in general—I would say teachers that are unhappy with a unionized profession, always striking, always fighting for contract issues...” (CST2). Teachers chose to be at XYZ, according to two teachers, and continued to stay, because of the school’s commitment to discipline. “When you have students responding in an essentially well-disciplined environment and who are supported in teaching techniques and continuous learning...these are good reasons to stay with a school” (CST3). One acknowledged the fact that there could be teachers at XYZ who just needed a job. Openmindedness was a quality attributed to teachers at XYZ by one of the teachers. “Teachers I think who are risk takers and adaptable and flexible and willing to try something out of the box, because this is” (CST3). That they tended to be young was noted by one teacher. “...a lot of new teachers...not yet tainted by a public system...” (CST1).

One teacher argued that scripts, imposed upon teachers, was in direct opposition to the notion of teachers as professionals. “If it were used in its entirety, I would say yes. If it doesn’t allow for teachers to be an individual and teach to their individual style... it inhibits our individuality and professionalism a little bit” (CST2). Finally, one teacher stated that the lack of

union protection affected who applied and remained at XYZ Charter School. “I would say there is some concern” (CST2). Another teacher saw no such relation. “I don’t think it’s a factor” (CST1).

Administrators

All six administrators cited agreement with school philosophy as the main reason for people teaching at XYZ School. “...they have a belief in the kind of structure we offer, the kind of direct teaching that we offer and are not fans of discovery learning and whole language and things like that” (CSA1). Of the six, three stated that teachers there were somewhat discouraged by the public system. Five of the six administrators admitted that needing a job was probably a huge factor for people accepting teaching positions at XYZ. “I think there are those teachers who are just out looking for a job” (CSA2). Two felt that teachers employed at XYZ were open minded. Half of the administrators agreed that teachers at XYZ tended to be young. “...[W]e look for young teachers. Flexible teachers. Teachers who are not convinced they have the only way and the best way to teach” (CSA6). The “structured and disciplined environment” (CSA2) offered by the school was preferred by the teachers who chose to work at XYZ, according to two administrators. One thought that teachers employed at XYZ were more business-minded than teachers in the public system.

Three administrators maintained that the use of scripts by teachers was no attack on their professionalism. “It doesn’t compromise professionalism one iota” (CSA1). Another added, “It’s not that there isn’t room for individual expression” (CSA5). The fact that teachers employed at XYZ did not belong to a union might affect some teachers’ decision about working at XYZ, reported two of the administrators. “It might keep people from applying here” (CSA1). One thought there was no such effect and another did not know if there was an effect. Finally,

one administrator contended that teachers were attracted to XYZ “because of the success they have heard of here” (CSA5).

Focus Groups

The adult focus group agreed that the school tended to attract young teachers who were committed to the philosophy spelled out in the charter. “...got a number of young teachers here, who don’t have a lot of experience and don’t have a lot of entrenched ways of doing things and they can be trained and encouraged to think in a different way” (CSFG). It was also stated that not having a union for teachers had no bearing on who applied or stayed. Besides, as one participant stated, “I don’t think it’s helpful for the kids to have a bunch of teachers who want the security and the ability to extort wages and students out of the government the way they [public school teachers] do” (CSFG). The student focus group held most of their teachers with high regard. We have “really good teachers” (CSSFG) but we also have “some teachers who cannot control half the class” (CSSFG).

Summary

Twelve interviewees thought that teachers chose to teach at XYZ because they were committed to the school’s philosophy. According to eight individuals, teachers employed at charter schools tended to be young and in need of a job. Some people associated with the school liked the idea that new teachers were not tainted by the public system. Seven participants contended that dissatisfaction with the public system was another reason teachers chose to teach at XYZ. Six admitted that not belonging to a union might influence whether or not teachers chose to work or stay at XYZ; five disagreed; and two did not know if union membership was an issue. Of the 14 individuals interviewed, seven did not think that teaching from a script was an attack on professionalism. Only two thought that it was in conflict with being a professional.

Equity

QUESTION: Do you think that the \$400 per student/year busing fee will keep some families from enrolling their children at XYZ?

Participants were asked if the \$400 per child per year busing fee would keep some children, with financially challenged parents, away from XYZ.

Parents

When asked whether or not the \$400 per student/year busing fee would keep some children out of the school, two parents thought it would while three thought otherwise. "...when we were in the public system, we had to pay busing fees anyways" (CSP1). One parent commented, "I think if the quality of a child's education isn't worth \$400 a year, maybe you shouldn't be at this school anyway" (CSP4). Another admitted, "I strongly believe in user pay; I'm against 'forced charity'" (CSP5).

Teachers

Two of the three teachers interviewed thought that the fee could keep some interested people from applying. The fee, according to one teacher, would have no bearing on who attended XYZ Charter School. "I would probably agree with those findings [average family income of parents of children at XYZ who responded to a survey was between \$40,000 and \$60,000], that the majority that are here fall into that income range" (CST1). One teacher argued that poor children did less well in school because of their parents' low expectations,

I know those statistics and statistically, people who come from low income families achieve lower and statistically those who come from higher income families achieve higher. That I think is directly reflected on the parents. If the parents have been satisfied

with a low level of success, they are going to be satisfied with the same from their children. (CST2)

Finally, one teacher thought that “[I]f parents really want their children here, they’ll cut the \$400 elsewhere, I guess” (CST3).

Administrators

As for the administrators, three maintained that the fee would affect the makeup of the clientele. “Yeah, it would have to, wouldn’t it. Yeah, I hadn’t thought about that. I’m sure there are some people that would find this when they’re really on a shoe-tight budget” (CSA3). Two, however, felt that the fee did not stand in the way of interested parents. “...we are a public school and we are first-come first-served” (CSA2) and “...we only draw those caring families...” (CSA2). One administrator blamed CBE for having to limit the number of students attending XYZ, not the \$400 fee. “What is limiting the public from attending this school is the resistance of the public board which has buildings that they could make available to us and won’t” (CSA3). The justification for allowing more inequity to exist in society is that it already exists,

You can go to schools in higher social economic areas, you can go to community schools and you look at the difference in the choice. Though the teachers are trying to do a good job, they’re sitting with 27 disadvantaged kids in the classroom and vary with a lot of baggage coming to school and another classroom with 27 kids in a high social economic area coming to school, that’s inequitable. Equal isn’t fair and fair isn’t equal and that’s totally inequitable, but that happens all the time. There is a total inequity there....The parents that have the higher political voice, whether they be in this school, whether they be in the public system, they’re the ones that are causing the inequity. (CSA4)

When asked if “most of them [students] would be middle class and up”, one administrator answered, “I suspect. Yes” (CSA5).

Focus Groups

The adult focus group was not convinced there was an effect. One participant answered, “Absolutely not” (CSFG). Another offered that there was “an option to have fees waved if you can’t afford them” (CSFG). Finally, one person admitted that it could be possible that people were scared off because they were unaware of the financial assistance. “...so whether it scares people off before they actually register once they found out there were fees. That’s hard to say, how to measure that” (CSFG).

The student focus group recognized the possibility of the fee being too high for some families: “That definitely is an issue....I think that’s keeping some students away” (CSSFG).

Summary

Seven of the 14 individuals interviewed thought that the \$400 per student/year busing fee could possibly keep some parents from enrolling their children at XYZ. This view was supported by both the adult and student focus groups.

Communitarian-Libertarian Debate

QUESTIONS: What do you think about the various arguments and issues concerning the impact of charter schools on public schools? Do you have any positions, interests, or stances that you would like to tell me about? Are there any viewpoints that you find particularly attractive or repelling?

The leading questions asked in December 2001 to constituents of XYZ Charter School did not elicit the desired responses regarding the debate. Consequently, the researcher adjusted the question when he met with CBE representatives upon returning to Calgary in the spring of 2002.

Parents

As stated above, responses to the debate were not completely satisfactory. Of all the groups interviewed, the parents interviewed provided the most meaningful responses. One parent expressed her desire to have all children properly educated. “Because I believe educating kids is paramount, way more important than just educating my three little kids. Who cares, what does it matter if my three little kids have a good education if 80% of society is getting a sub-level education and 20% of those kids are falling through the cracks” (CSP1). She believed in public education and “stuck with the charter school...because I believe that this is the only way to show the public school system how to improve” (CSP1).

When a parent was asked about the possible detrimental effect on public schools when the caring, hard working parents took their children out of the system, she answered that “they didn’t [listen] to us when we were there trying....I couldn’t make a difference....I can’t beat my head against a brick wall anymore” (CSP2). Another parent was convinced that “it’s competition in anything that helps bring up the standards generally...so I don’t see it [charter schools] take away from the [common] good at all” (CSP3). Finally, one parent considered individual choice far superior to the concept of working toward a common good. “I think the concept ‘collective good’ is a very woozy term that power lusters have used throughout history to sacrifice some people to the good of others” (CSP5). He was adamant in his feelings towards public education in general,

I think that the public education system is an inherently bad idea, and I’ll explain why.

The essence of public education is that the government takes your money by force, thereby depriving parents the choice of rewarding good schools with their money.

You’re forced to pay the school even if it’s bad. That makes the schools no longer accountable to the parents. Sure they can promise all kinds of things to parents but in

reality they become accountable to the government, which means they become accountable to the people who influence the government, to the teachers' unions and countless other special interest groups. (CSP5)

This parent did not believe in centralized standards and believed that anyone should be able to bestow certification. "But in the long run the school has to have total control of the decision making in order to achieve excellence and thereby please their customers, and thereby profit; that's how you fuel better innovative ideas in education" (CSP5). He felt that charter schools have not gone far enough.

But the problem with the charter schools is that they are still accountable to the government. I think the next step would be to give vouchers or, better still, tax credits, so that parents can go and reward schools for performance. It will create an environment for providing better education and finally, eventually, way down the road when all these other socialist schemes are put by the wayside, we can have private education. And we'll have a fabulous education system. (CSP5)

Teachers

The feeling among the three teachers interviewed was that if the public schools were meeting the needs of children and parents, charter schools would not exist (CST1, CST2, CST3). However, one teacher was convinced that charter schools should exist "as long as standards are maintained and charter schools are closely watched or monitored" (CST3).

Administrators

One administrator clearly stated that education was a personal responsibility and should not be left up to the state. "I think it [charter schools] underlines the traditional view that education is a parenting responsibility and a parenting right as opposed to the growing point of view, I think that this is the responsibility possibly of the state, which I think is a dangerous

perspective on education” (CSA3). Also, one administrator thought that school choice was not contrary to the common good. “There’s no question that parents want choice. Most parents want choice. Legitimate choice. I don’t understand why that’s contrary to the common good. For parents to be able to choose a school of their liking” (CSA6).

Focus Groups

One member of the adult focus group argued that the education of his children was more important than the education of all children. “First and foremost for me would be the education of my own personal child and I don’t care what you have to do to get that” (CSFG). It was also stated that “the only common good out there is when the individuals are served well” (CSFG). Finally, one member of the adult focus group maintained that education is not a public good but rather it is a service.

I guess my other comment about this is that I don’t see education as a public good. I see it as a service that can be provided, like any other service in society. Anybody who claims it’s [a] public good probably has some kind of vested interest in making the kids conform to somebody’s single standard of how things have got to be.... (CSFG)

Summary

For the most part, representatives of XYZ Charter School saw individual choice as more important than the common good. Some people maintained that you could have both the common good and choice. There were a wide range of reasons why people exercised their choice to attend XYZ. One individual was sending her children to wake up the public system; another showed utter disdain for the public system and did not think charter schools had gone far enough and proposed vouchers and eventual privatization. The common good was seen as a way of keeping bright children down to the lowest common denominator. Finally, it was felt that education was a service and not a public good.

Learnings

QUESTION: What can CBE schools learn from XYZ to make them better? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer?

Participants were asked to suggest what public schools could learn from XYZ Charter School.

Parents

Four out five parents said CBE schools could learn the method of teaching—direct instruction—from XYZ Charter School. “I’m really pleased with this school here and I think if the public schools just adopted the whole school’s philosophy and programs 100% they’d be better off for it. But being a realist, I don’t see that happening” (CSP1). The discipline policy and procedures were something public schools could learn from XYZ Charter School, according to four parents. “Well, the discipline. It’s just truly amazing to me that children don’t have to do anything seriously wrong and they are dealt with in a firm but kind way and the behavior doesn’t escalate” (CSP3).

Of the five parents interviewed, three contended that the requirement of parental involvement was something public schools could learn. Two parents answered school uniforms to the question what could CBE schools learn from XYZ. Limiting class size was mentioned by one parent as something public schools could learn. One parent said public schools could be accountable to parents rather than to the government. “Public schools can learn that they have a responsibility to be accountable to the parents” (CSP5).

Teachers

Two of the three teachers interviewed stated that public schools could learn how to be accountable to parents. Of the three teachers interviewed, two thought that public schools could

learn more about the philosophy of XYZ. One teacher thought that public schools could learn about direct instruction from XYZ. “Better teaching techniques for presenting information to the students and have them master what they learn. There are some techniques I have learned here and didn't know before” (CST3). The discipline policy was mentioned by one teacher as something public schools could learn. “So not necessarily the form in which curriculum is taught, because I think we need a variety of ways, but more the classroom management and school-wide management that goes on” (CST2). Public schools could learn from the charter school to value their teachers more, according to one teacher. Providing choice is something to learn for public schools in Calgary. “...the public system I think does a good job at working for the majority of people but they need to realize they can't grasp everybody and we aren't here to try to overtake the public system, we are here to provide another form of learning for those that need it” (CST2).

Administrators

Four out of the six administrators interviewed stated that direct instruction was the most important thing CBE schools could learn from XYZ.

...they [CBE schools] could learn from us specifically, especially this school, is to focus on research based methodology and education rather than jumping from and starting a methodology from a philosophical view point because it sounds interesting and then developing it and then finding out later that it didn't work. (CSA2)

Another administrator stated. “Oh, methods of instruction. I think there is something that can be said for direct instruction...we need to get back to the basics” (CSA4). Of the five administrators, three maintained that requiring parental involvement was something public schools could learn from the charter school. “...it's kind of nice to see parents out cleaning

windows to get a new school going and painting things and building shelves and putting things together and in our classrooms” (CSA4). Being accountable to parents was something public schools could learn from the charter school, according to three administrators,

...so absolutely the biggest thing they can learn is that parents do have some decision making powers as to what they want for their kids. Parents are their kids’ first educators and you can’t just take that and throw it away and say this is what we’ve decided your child will do and you’re just a parent so what do you know. Well, I’ve never cottoned to that kind of thing myself, I don’t like to have my head patted. So I think they need to recognize that it’s a cooperative venture and not just ‘we’re the experts and we’ll tell you what your child needs to be doing’. (CSA1)

Two administrators contended that public schools might consider school uniforms similar to those worn at XYZ. “I think uniforms would probably be a good thing to have, generally. Because it gets rid of the obstacles to learning which are created by excessive competition and fashion and lack of modesty and all the different kinds of things that the clothing thing seems to bring” (CSA3). According to two administrators, the discipline policy implemented at XYZ was another area that public schools could learn from it. One administrator hoped that public schools would learn the importance of offering choice to parents. Finally, one administrator thought that the required month long teacher induction program was important for public schools to learn. “We paid them the substitute teacher per day for 3 ½ weeks [to attend the summer teacher induction program]” (CSA5).

Focus Groups

The adult focus group agreed with many of the issues mentioned in individual interviews. The philosophy of XYZ and the instructional methodology—direct instruction—employed there were mentioned as something that CBE schools could learn from XYZ,

We are getting the results. So if they would just look at their results, that are not working, look at a system that is working, model after it, again, it's common sense stuff....So come and talk to us about what we are doing. Come and sit in our classrooms, come and talk to our administration....And a lot of them [public school educators], I think they just aren't [willing to consider anything different]. Would rather create smoke screens of funding....(CSFG)

Requiring students to wear school uniforms was cited as something public schools could learn. Compulsory parental involvement and the fact that the school was accountable to parents were noted as areas CBE schools could learn from XYZ. "I think they can learn from the involvement of stakeholders. I think the amount of direct influence and the role that most families play in their community school is minimized to the point of insignificance..." (CSFG). One member of the adult focus group thought that public schools were becoming more responsive to parents but for the wrong reason. "But my main thing is that they have learned that they have got to be responsive to what parents [want] and that might be financially motivated and I absolutely think it is" (CSFG). Providing choice for parents was also noted because "children learn differently" (CSFG).

Members of the student focus group stated that public schools could learn about discipline and teaching methodology from XYZ. "We also have the ready position, and we don't have that at public school...and they just sit wherever and they do whatever they want while all

the teachers are talking... and we have to sit nice and listen to them” (CSSFG). In public schools, according to one student, “...kids can come in anytime and if they like skip classes teachers don’t really care but if you’re not here for one class the teachers have to find out where you are” (CSSFG). Students also thought that requiring students to wear uniforms was something public schools could learn from XYZ. Finally, public school teachers could learn to care more about their students as they did at XYZ. “And sometimes you think the teachers [at XYZ] are so mean and you just hate them. That’s only because they care and they need to be strict so you get the rule and you get it. That shows that they care” (CSSFG). Students stated that they would like a better library, home economics room, and cafeteria.

Summary

Although no less than 15 items were mentioned that public schools could learn from XYZ, and charter schools in general, there were four main areas. Nine of the 14 people interviewed, supported by both adult and student focus groups, maintained that public schools could learn more about and implement direct instruction. The discipline policy at XYZ, according to seven interviewees, was a system that CBE could introduce into their schools which were experiencing discipline problems. This suggestion was substantiated by the student focus group. The other two items reported by participants involved the parents. Six people, as well as the adult focus group, cited parental involvement as an area public schools could learn from XYZ. Parents are so involved that six individuals liked the fact that XYZ was accountable to the parents. The adult focus group also held this view.

Public Schools

The next sections will supply descriptions of CBE and the public schools participating in the study and answers to questions to individuals and groups posed by the researcher.

Descriptions of Three CBE Schools

As of April 26, 2001, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) operated a total of 224 schools—140 elementary, 10 elementary/junior, 35 junior, 3 junior/senior, 18 senior, and 18 special. There were 95,465 students enrolled in these schools which was down from 97,343 in 1999. There were 5,352.81 FTE teaching staff members, 2,538.98 FTE non-teaching staff, and 765 temporary teachers and substitutes. The pupil-teacher ratio was for elementary 18.44, for junior 17.9, and for senior 18.39. Kindergarten, French Immersion, and a Mandarin/English bilingual program were offered. CBE also operated a continuing education program, Chinook College, that served over 30,000 adults and children. All schools were placed into one of nine Collaborative Learning Communities (CLCs). Each CLC had a director. There was a chief superintendent of schools and four superintendents. The 2000-2001 operating budget was \$604,425,000 which worked out to \$6,319 per student. There were seven CBE board members, five of whom were women.

CPR Elementary School, which had 12 students enrolled at the campus of XYZ that participated in the study, was built in 1956 and was situated in a blue collar neighborhood. It was 30 minutes southeast of XYZ (on freeways and not during rush time). It had 27 classrooms, including a library, reading room, gymnasium, art room, and two science labs. There were 18.4 teachers and a principal employed (16 FTE classroom teachers, .7 Physical Education, .9 Music, .8 Resource Room). The non-teaching staff consisted of 1 caretaker, 1.5 secretarial, 3 education assistants, .8 teaching aide, and 4 lunchroom supervisors. There were 330 students enrolled with 307 projected for the fall of 2002 in this K-8 facility. According to the CBE utilization formula, CPR Elementary was operating at 53 percent and has been mentioned as one that may be closed.

The hallways were decorated with bulletin boards mainly celebrating student art. Cinderblocks were painted by students depicting their family—a drawing and family name appeared on each picture. Other bulletin boards displayed information for parents and other community members regarding school happenings, school goals, staffing information, and space allotment.

In the Annual Report the school vision was stated as, “Our focus is success, growth, and the development of each child’s social, emotional, and intellectual potential. Success is more than the achievement of an end product....The school and community both work together to create a vibrant, exciting, and meaningful learning environment”. The purpose was “to provide a nurturing learning environment that inspires and motivates students to become independent, responsible, and active learners”. The belief statements were stated and the guiding principles were listed as “Do our best; Treat everyone with respect; and Work together to make our school safe”. The Motto was stated as “Enjoy Life, Enjoy Learning”. It was obvious that this school attempted to reach out to the community.

The CPR Elementary School Handbook included the school organization, goals, and expectations, general discipline policy, emergency procedures, and other useful information for both students and parents. It was evident that the school developed a plan and communicated it to the homes of students.

Harvard of Northeast School was situated in a culturally diverse (65 percent visible minorities) blue-collar neighborhood. It was 30 minutes northeast of XYZ (on freeways and not during rush time). Five students, who had cum files listing Harvard of Northeast School as their last public school attended, were presently enrolled at the charter school campus under review. There were 650 students in Grades 7-9 served by 37 teachers and 14 support staff. Students were

bused in from two surrounding communities and spent between 1 and 1½ hours on a bus. Local students also attended. The school was a well-maintained building with student work, mainly art, adorning the walls in the hallways.

Included in the 2001 annual report were the belief statements: “Our mission is to ensure individual student development through effective education and quality learning opportunities for all students....We believe that each student should be recognized as unique and accepted as an individual....The manner in which students, teachers, and parents relate has provided an atmosphere of strong support allowing our students to develop in a caring, safe environment...”.

It was stated in the 2001-2002 student agenda that the agenda was prepared to acquaint both the students and the parents with important organizational and operational information about the school.

Cougar Jr. High School, situated in northeast Calgary, was a Grade 4-9 school that was organized into three Learning Communities: Grade 3-4-5, Grade 6-7, and Grade 8-9, with approximately 165 students in each. It was 20 minutes northeast of XYZ (on freeways and not during rush time). The school had a principal and vice-principal, nine specialists, twenty-three teachers, and fourteen support staff. Cougar Jr. High was the designated school for a wide variety of neighborhoods with 85 percent of its students being bused. The Alberta government had a policy of busing students to schools, rather than building schools, while there was room in existing buildings. There were seven students enrolled in the charter school campus participating in this study whose last public school attended, according to their cum files, was Cougar Jr. High.

Included in the 2000-2001 Annual Report were: The Mission Statement: “A Community Dedicated to Fostering Confident Lifelong Learners and Responsible Citizens” and Belief

Statements: We believe in sharing ideas and resources and working together to provide child-centred programs which foster self-directed independent and responsible learners. We believe that explicit expectations for student conduct and high standards for student achievement promote optimum student growth. We believe that diverse teaching and learning activities result in the development of the whole child. We believe that all children can learn when they are engaged in relevant purposeful endeavors. We believe that a caring and supportive environment creates a positive learning community. We believe that the educational process is a partnership involving home, school, student, and community.

The Student Handbook opened with a place for parents agreeing to support the handbook by encouraging their children to use them.

Charter Schools

QUESTION: What do you know about XYZ Charter School and/or other charter schools?

It became apparent to the researcher early on in interviews with CBE school representatives that there was a wide range of knowledge about charter schools. Consequently, he began to ask participants what they knew about charter schools, and in particular, XYZ Charter School.

Parents

According to ten of the 18 parents interviewed, charter schools were more like private schools than public ones. “I would say philosophically private, but financially they’re obviously public” (Public School Parent 11). Another parent argued that charter schools were “[m]ore like private schools getting public funding....And yet they’re being pretty exclusive like a private school” (PSP9). One parent maintained, “I would definitely call a charter school private, but you don’t have to pay for it” (PSP18). Nine parents admitted not knowing much about charter

schools. That charter schools were publicly funded was mentioned by eight parents. Charter schools offered specialized programs according to five parents. Five parents contended that charter schools were very strict. "...they're quite military, very strict..." (PSP8). One parent offered, "...it is such a strict, stringent, military type of environment..." (PSP11).

According to four parents, parents of children who attended charter schools were usually very committed and involved. "I think the idea is they focus more on what the parents or committees decide on..." (PSP14). Charter schools, three parents maintained, had smaller class sizes. Another three parents stated that charter schools were allowed to be selective when admitting students. "...[T]hey pick and choose with some format. I'm not sure what the format is" (PSP3). One parent thought that charter schools "are pretty particular about the kids they want into their schools (because students write an entrance exam)" (PSP11). Three parents claimed that although charter schools received public funding, they were not held to the same rules and regulations as were public schools. "They do not follow the same rules and regulations as the public system and because they make that choice to be different..." (PSP10). According to an interviewee, "From my understanding, they are allowed to dictate what goes on in their schools and public schools aren't allowed to do that and I don't think that's fair with public money that they don't have to follow the same rules" (PSP5). Parents chose charter schools because they were perceived to be structured, offering a back-to-the-basics education, according to three parents. "...[T]hey're structured more for just the basics really, reading, writing, math, not a lot of extra stuff like in the public schools" (PSP12). Two parents said that charter school parents were dissatisfied with their public school's performance. "...[T]hey're a school that parents who don't want their children in the public system, can choose to go to..." (PSP2).

Students at charter schools receive too much homework, according to two parents. Finally, two parents stated that students attending charter schools wore uniforms.

Teachers

Three of the teachers interviewed thought that charter schools could choose their students. "...[I]f your child has a problem following rules and routines, he won't be able to go to this school. They are able to discriminate against those kids and they can discriminate against special needs. That's I guess the big argument, whether they should get public (funds) or not" (Public School Teacher 5) and "...but there's a waiting list. So they can be selective now" (PST7). According to two teachers, charter schools offered a specialty or catered to a specific group. "Some charter schools tend to be biased towards very bright children, children who have specific talents" (PST4). One teacher stated that charter schools were more similar to private schools than to public schools.

I don't think if they were public they can select students and can choose to have or have not in their schools. I think the only reason they can call themselves public is because they don't have a big tuition fee. They get public money, but that I think is the only reason they aren't a private school. You call yourself a private school and you can do whatever you want in the sense of who you would like to have in your school and who would not be suitable....So why are we calling them public schools? (PST6)

Charter school parents, according to one teacher, were very supportive of their child's education. "I think maybe in some ways charter schools are dealing with parents who have much more ambition for their children..." (PST4). Another teacher stated,

Parents [of students attending XYZ] that are truly willing to take an interest in what's going on in school and at home and willing to follow through with any sort of situations

at school whether it's home work or discipline, anything like that. They need to sign a contract that states you do certain things. So, I think it is parents that are far more involved. (PST8)

A teacher held that charter school parents were dissatisfied with public education. "And what I've noticed from town hall meetings it is definitely a strong group of negative people who are looking at other alternatives continually..." (PST8). Charter schools, stated one teacher, were publicly funded. Finally, one teacher contended that charter schools had smaller class sizes than did public schools.

Administrators

One of the administrators maintained that charter school parents were dissatisfied with the public schools their children attended. "...[P]arents believe that to get what they want, they're going to have to leave the Board [CBE]" (Public School Administrator 4). According to another administrator, charter school parents were very committed to their children's education. Charter schools, argued one administrator, catered to a certain specialty or group of people. One administrator stated that charter schools were very strict. Charter schools were elitist according to one administrator,

It's elitist. It's elitist also for the parents having to come in and contribute so much time or whatever. Because there are a lot of parents that do not feel comfortable in schools and would love to do some things, but don't feel comfortable being there. So that eliminates those parents. If they feel that all of the parents they have to associate with are very well educated and very articulated people, they won't send their kids there. (PSA4)

Finally, one administrator admitted not knowing much about XYZ or charter schools generally.

Focus Groups

By and large participants in the three adult focus groups provided similar answers when asked what they knew about charter schools. One participant maintained that charter school parents were likely to be unhappy with public schools. Parents supported their children and the charter school, according to the group. It was thought that charter schools resembled private schools but received public money. “Charter schools are funded the same as public schools” (Public School Focus Group) without having to follow the same rules and regulations as do public schools,

...it’s actually an interesting thing that we have public schools that are fully funded but they get to play by a different set of rules than we do, and they are, it’s a tremendous advantage compared to the public school system. We sign collective agreements....But the charter schools don’t have to—they can kind of cruise under. They have a lot of the benefits of being a public school, but they don’t have what could be a disadvantage to them when it comes to strength. And they like to tell you that. Charter school teachers will never go on strike. (PSFG)

Another member of an adult focus group stated that “Charters are sort of a private public school” (PSFG). Charter schools, according to the groups, chose their students. There were comments such as: “[T]hey are being selective in terms of who they are accepting into their school” (PSFG), “I don’t think a lot of people realize that it’s not (open to all children)” (PSFG), and “...the kids that are being drawn away from the public system are the kids that are probably, in a way the good students” (PSFG). Because of this “...the public system is ending up with a disproportionate amount of those types of kids [who have difficulty learning] because... in some ways it’s the average kid that gets drawn out...” (PSFG). Charter schools, the groups maintained,

offered a specialty and catered to a certain group of people. It was noted that charter schools had smaller class sizes,

I think the perception is still there, that charter schools do a better job than public schools, but in conversations [with] parents, the single factor that I keep hearing is they [XYZ] can limit their class sizes and that's a really important thing for parents, they believe a smaller class size produces a better education. (PSFG)

Other common perceptions were that charter schools were very strict "militant style" (PSFG) and assigned lots of homework. "...[I]t's not uncommon for him to bring home 2 hours of homework on a regular basis. He misses a lot of community activities because he's at home doing homework" (PSFG). Another area discussed was the ease with which charter schools could expel students. "...[T]hey have the ability...to dismiss people, literally, if you do not agree with the charter that they have set out, they can then ask you to leave or not accept you back that year. So that is definitely not public education as we know it" (PSFG). This opinion was supported by another group member: "So you have an easy out as a charter school, because if it's not working, you can say go away. We, if it's not working, have to say, gosh we have to work harder cause we have to figure out a way to make this work with this kid. So that's not truly a public education, I don't think, if you can say goodbye" (PSFG).

The two student focus groups supported the views of individual interviewees who claimed that charter schools were similar to private schools, received public money, and were not held to the same rules and regulations as public schools: "It's supported by the public system but they don't do the same things as other schools and they have their own charter" (Public School Student Focus Group). Another student stated: "I don't think they should have a program using public money if they're not going to advertise it" (PSSFG) thereby ensuring more equal access.

One focus group member argued that "...if it's public, shouldn't it kind of be for everyone instead of limited, cause then it kind of falls under private when it's public" (PSSFG). Also mentioned was that charter schools were strict: "...it's really strict..." (PSFG); and picked their students: "I know you have to take a test to get in" (PSSFG). The groups thought that charter school parents were likely to be unhappy with the public school system: "...parents that don't like the way schools are run" (PSSFG). One student admitted knowing nothing about charter schools before being asked to participate in the study: "I wasn't aware charter schools existed until I was requested to answer questions about charter schools" (PSSFG).

Summary

The most common answer was that charter schools were more like private schools than public schools. This was attested to by 12 participants and supported by both the adult focus groups and the student focus groups. Ten participants, mainly parents, admitted to not knowing much about charter schools. That charter schools are publicly funded was mentioned by nine interviewees, most of whom were not very happy about the diversion of funds from public schools. This fact was also noted by both adult and student focus groups. Also, eight participants were aware that charter schools were specialized and catered to a certain group of children. This observation was supported by the adult focus groups. Finally, six interviewees stated that parents of attending students were supportive of the charter school. This was confirmed by the adult focus groups. Six thought that charter schools selected their students which was confirmed by both adult and student focus groups. And six were of the opinion that charter schools were very strict which was again corroborated by adult and student focus groups.

Changes

QUESTION: What changes do you think have been brought about in CBE schools by the existence of XYZ Charter School?

Before asking participants about specific changes to CBE schools caused by XYZ, the researcher asked the general question about changes to see if there were reasons in addition to those cited.

Parents

Four out of the 18 parents interviewed from three different schools maintained that there were no changes in public schools due to charter schools. Three parents thought that XYZ was in existence long enough to be able to determine whether or not it brought about change in CBE schools. One parent disagreed: "...they too haven't been around, there hasn't been no long study, everybody can be great for a little while, and if you can continue that, that's wonderful, but who know(s). Time will only tell" (PSP1). Of the 18 parents interviewed, three argued that CBE schools had become more responsive and diverse because of their will to improve,

It's a spur in the side to get going, to get better, to improve, to do things in a way that will actually bring some of those students back into the system or prevent people from looking elsewhere because I see there is a general perception that people think that education is better in the charter and private schools than in the public system. (PSP15)

According to three parents, public schools have had to become more competitive because of charter schools. One parent recognized the financial effect of charter schools on public schools. "...[I]t [XYZ Charter School] affects the numbers in the neighborhood school" (PSP4). Charter schools have forced public schools to offer more choice for parents, according to one parent. Two parents were concerned that charter schools were breaking up communities. "I

think it breaks up the neighborhood, because on one little street you have kids going to charter, kids going to public, kids going to catholic, and kids going to private. So the old days of all the kids in the neighborhood going to school together, playing together, socializing together, those days are gone” (PSP6). Of the 18 parents interviewed, two confessed they did not know if charter schools affected public schools.

Teachers

Six of the nine teachers interviewed contended that XYZ had not been in existence long enough to determine whether or not it had an effect on CBE schools. One disagreed. Five teachers recognized the financial effect of charter schools on CBE schools: “[M]oney for public schools be funneled to a charter school system and I have a problem with us becoming more like our public schools in the States, where we are the dumping sites...” (PST9). Two of the nine stated that charter schools have had no effect on public schools. According to three teachers public schools are becoming more responsive and diverse since the start up of charter schools. “[P]robably the biggest change I’ve seen is there’s not so much pressure as far as group study and self-direct projects ...I think you see a little more structure now being implemented back into public schools” (PST 5). One teacher accused charter schools of changing society,

So I think the creation of charter schools, private schools, home schooling and so on, there’s a philosophy shift here and that seems to be coming more and more entrenched. Then you get competing values with private and public, social responsibility with profit and so on, so I see that as a change in the way of looking at the world and functioning in a society as well. (PST3)

Charter schools have offered choice to parents other than the public system, argued one teacher. “I feel that some parents who feel that maybe there are perhaps too many children in the classrooms or too much diversity in the classroom feel that they have a choice” (PST4). It was thought by one teacher that the public school system was under closer scrutiny because of charter schools. Finally, one teacher admitted not knowing if there was an effect.

Administrators

All five administrators personally interviewed agreed that charter schools had caused public schools to take a closer look at what they were doing: “[...]they [questions] get posed because when people are voluntarily exiting one school system for another, I think the responsible system asks the questions why and what can we do about that, because a public system needs to meet the needs of everyone” (PSA2). Another administrator offered. “It’s [charter schools] telling us in the public system, which I believe by the way has served us very well over the years, it’s sending us a message that we need to make some changes within our system so I think that’s positive” (PSA5).

Only one administrator of the five interviewed thought that XYZ had been in existence long enough to determine its effects, if any, on CBE schools other than to cause them to reflect and dialogue. One administrator claimed there was no effect on public schools instigated by charter schools. According to three administrators, the largest effect of charter schools had been that the public system was planning to open up a school similar to XYZ. Of the five administrators interviewed, one recognized the financial effect of charter schools on public schools. The availability of choice for some parents was seen as a change brought about by charter schools by one administrator,

...I think the message became more clear to the public system that unless we offer some alternatives within the system and I know the charter schools are within the system, but unless we offer some alternatives within the public system as we know it, we will probably continue lose students to charter schools and private schools. (PSA5)

Finally, one administrator maintained that public schools had been under more scrutiny since the advent of charter schools.

Focus Groups

Mention was made by a member of one adult focus group that proof of the effects of XYZ on CBE schools was the planned opening of a school similar to XYZ by CBE called The Traditional Learning Centre. The groups stated that public schools were self-evaluating because of the competition offered by charter schools. "I think it has developed a sense of competition so rather than looking at the needs of students and children ...we need to do this, because if we don't somebody else will, so I don't think that's always a good way to develop programs" (PSFG).

Dialogue between charter schools and public schools and among public school representatives had begun, according to the adult focus groups,

I think it has caused us to really reflect upon what kinds of schools we have and what is motivating people to look for differences and I think because of that it has created a healthy dialogue amongst our school-based people and administrators to examine what does the community want and I think to that response we have begun to look at what are some of the alternative agendas that people truly want for their children and how can we as a public system who still value the public educational forum, how can we respond to those needs. (PSFG)

The existence of charter schools had also resulted in parents questioning the existing system. Thanks to charter schools, public schools were being forced to expend funds for advertising that adds to the financial effect on public schools. “And it (charter schools) takes the numbers away from the regular public school system. Therefore, your programs go down, your numbers go down, the opportunities that you can offer your kids go down...[we have] to work harder in getting that good message out” (PSFG). One adult focus group stated that charter schools had offered parents choice. “From my point of view it has made me think about whether that really is a better alternative for my children. Maybe in that way it has also stimulated more interest about what actually is going on in this school versus that school” (PSFG).

Some members of the student focus groups thought that charter schools had not really affected public schools yet. “Well, I don’t think that right now, there’s that big of a difference, cause there’s not that many...” (PSSFG). However, upon closer examination of the topic, students did mention that public schools, because of how education is funded, were financially affected by charter schools. “But I’m told that charter schools use some resources that are from the public schools. And I think that’s true, and if they are, they’re using resources for public schools to serve less students and taking money out of the pot that should be used for the greater student” (PSSFG).

Summary

Seven individuals stated that XYZ had a financial effect on CBE schools. This was supported by both the adult and student focus groups. Of the people interviewed, seven did not think that XYZ had an effect on CBE schools. A member of a student focus group felt similarly. Also, seven participants contended that XYZ had not been in existence long enough to determine whether or not it had made a difference. Five people, however, thought that it had been around

long enough. That XYZ had caused public schools to be more responsive to parents was maintained by six parents.

Diversity

QUESTION: Do you think that the presence of XYZ Charter School has affected the diversity of schools for parents to choose from? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

All individuals participating in personal interviews were asked if they thought that the public school system was more diverse because of the existence of XYZ Charter School.

Parents

When asked whether or not XYZ had affected the diversity of public schools, responses from parents were divided equally. Eight parents thought that there was more diversity within the public school system because of charter schools: “You can choose to go to different styles of learning. You can choose to go to French Immersion, you can choose to go to an art program high school and those are all in publicly funded means...” (PSP6). Another parent added, “...[I]f your child has a special interest there are schools they are starting right now that are public that focus on what your child is focusing on and that’s good if your child has a special interest...” (PSP9). Eight parents, however, insisted that they had noted no change in diversity of offerings. “I don’t think it alone has caused that diversity” (PSP16). Finally, two parents stated that they did not know whether or not the public system was more diverse because of the existence of charter schools.

Teachers

Of the nine teachers interviewed, five thought that charter schools had increased diversity in CBE. “There’s been some diversity” (PST2). Two teachers believed charter schools had no effect on the diversity in CBE. “No, because any

new school increases the diversity of choices, automatically, in my estimation”

(PST1). The other two teachers were not sure whether XYZ caused a rise in diversity in CBE.

Administrators

Three administrators felt that there had definitely been an increase in diversity in public schools thanks to the existence of charter schools. “It’s starting to in Calgary” (PSA1). One administrator saw no rise in diversity,

I don’t really feel that it has. I think that junior high schools in my experience over 33 years in this city have really attempted to provide a smorgasbord of things for kids in the school to attract the interest level of kids. The areas where kids feel they have expertise and develop things and so on. We’ve provided a vast array of things....I think the diversity is being well looked after in our school....I think we’ve done a good job in trying to meet the diversity and we have a lot of diversity in Calgary schools, particularly in certain areas of the city. (PSA3)

One was unsure of any increase in diversity.

Summary

Responses to the question of increased diversity on the part of the CBE school system because of XYZ were mixed. Sixteen individuals thought that there had been an increase in diversity because of XYZ while 11 participants contended that there had not been an increase in diversity. Of those interviewed, two admitted they did not know if there was an increase in diversity.

Responsiveness

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School has affected the responsiveness of CBE schools to the needs of parents? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Interviewees were asked whether or not they thought that, because of XYZ, CBE schools were more responsive to the needs and desires of parents.

Parents

Nine of the parents interviewed either thought that public schools were not more responsive than they were previously or that if they were it was not because of charter schools. "...[W]e've had a lot of input. They've been very accommodating. Very much looking for what the parents' views are and what our goals are versus what the school's are and working together with us that way...does that have anything to do with the charter schools? I have no idea. But I do know we have a lot of input" (PSP2). Another parent stated, "That's why I like the public system—they've always been good that way" (PSP5). One parent answered,

No. I would say they are more responsive to parents generally because parents are 1) more educated; 2) more vocal; 3) more aware of how important their role is in the partnership with the school, but I don't think it's necessarily because of the role of charter schools. I think that's just the development of our public society and our public system. (PSP6)

Five parents, however, felt that CBE schools, due to the existence of XYZ, were more responsive to the needs of parents. "Yes, because I think they want to keep their kids in the public system. They don't want them to go to the other schools, so I think they're a little more accommodating" (PSP7). Another parent added, "Yeah. I think it has affected the responsiveness. I think the public school has become more aware of how it [XYZ] is impacting

them...” (PSP16). Two parents were unsure whether or not a change had taken place in the responsiveness of public schools to parents.

Teachers

Five of nine teachers interviewed were convinced that public schools were more responsive to the needs of parents because of charter schools. “I think we are more aware of what parents are wanting” (PST7). One teacher disagreed. “No. I believe the public schools have always been extremely responsive to the needs of parents” (PST1). Three teachers did not know whether or not public schools were more responsive to parents because of the existence of charter schools. “I think that’s an ongoing thing for public schools anyway. They have to be responsive to parents and I don’t know if they are more so now than before” (PST3).

Administrators

Four of the five administrators interviewed concluded that CBE had become more responsive to parents since the inception of charter schools. “Well I think that we’re starting to see at the board level in Calgary a real serious push towards developing programs within our public schools that will meet the needs of kids or the express needs of kids around the system” (PSA3). One administrator disagreed that public schools were now more responsive because of XYZ, and other charter schools,

No. I don’t think many of the schools, other than the principals know anything about the school (XYZ). But if you were to survey the 6,000 teachers, probably 5,000 wouldn’t even know that the school is going in—or care. Because they’re working really hard in their own settings, they believe they are responding to the needs and so I don’t think this particular school has changed that. (PSA4)

Focus Groups

A member of the adult focus group responded that charter schools had not caused CBE schools to be more responsive to the needs of parents. “I don’t think it’s because of charter schools. It’s just that things are changing. I think parents are more aware of the, some, not all, are more aware of the situation that their kids are in and I know even in the last five years I’ve changed” (PSFG).

Summary

Agreement on this topic proved to be elusive as 14 individuals thought that public schools were more responsive to parents because of the existence of XYZ Charter School and 11 people disagreed. Five participants admitted not knowing.

Financial

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School has had a financial effect on CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Interviewees were asked if they thought that XYZ had a financial effect on CBE schools.

Parents

Of the 18 parents interviewed, 15 were convinced that XYZ had a definite financial effect on CBE schools: “Yes. I do. They’re trying to get all these kids to come over to that school. And they are. They’re getting kids to go to that school so they’re taking (money) away from the public system” (PSP7). This view was echoed by another parent who stated that “It (XYZ) has definitely directed some money to those schools that could have been used in the regular main stream schools, whether it be the public or Catholic Boards” (PSP14). The other three parents admitted that they were unsure as to whether or not charter schools had a detrimental financial effect. “I honestly don’t know” (PSP12).

Teachers

Eight of the nine teachers interviewed stated that XYZ was having a financial effect on public schools. “Yes. I think it’s (XYZ) draining public money. I don’t think that’s a good thing either” (PST2). Another teacher stated, “Cause they’ve taken students from us and our school gets funded by the number of students and our enrollment has dropped so we’re losing funding” (PST7). One teacher disagreed. “No. I don’t think so...basically we’re not having to accommodate them [students attending charter schools]...(PST4).

Administrators

All five administrators who participated in the study through personal interviews recognized the financial effect XYZ had on CBE: “Yes, because it has reduced our student grants” (PSA1). This view was supported when another administrator maintained. “Well, I guess if you’re losing kids, obviously it’s going to take away money you would have in your own particular school to deal with things” (PSA3).

Focus Groups

The adult focus groups confirmed what the vast majority of individuals interviewed claimed. “Oh yeah, I think so. Sure. Even if you got 10 kids a year even, that’s a lot of money” (PSFG). Another participant stated,

And every time a new charter school opens up it takes away those resources from the public system in that every time we say okay, this group can have their own school and we will supply them with a school and the funds....So by letting the charter schools in, maybe we’re taking away from the funds that could be used to build community public schools. (PSFG)

One adult focus group member stated that a CBE central office staff was spending most of his time dealing with the issues of that very small group of charter school parents and that very small school, thus taking him away from other system responsibilities (PSFG).

Summary

The answer to the question regarding the financial effect of XYZ Charter School was close to being unanimous. Twenty-nine people interviewed and the adult focus groups were convinced that XYZ had a financial effect on public schools and only one individual stated otherwise. Three participants admitted not knowing if there had been a financial effect.

Accountability

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School is more accountable than, less accountable than, or similarly accountable to CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Those participating in the study through personal interviews were quizzed about accountability. They were asked whether charter schools were more or less accountable than public schools or similarly accountable.

Parents

Eight parents contended that charter schools were less accountable than public schools. “I think the public school is more accountable. They have more people watching over them than the charters. I think the charters just have that whatever that Board that watches over the school whereas the public has the Board, and the public and has more input all over...” (PSP12). According to four parents, charter schools were more accountable than public schools. “I thought they would have been less accountable ... but knowing they’re public education and they have limitations, they are probably more accountable because they’re away from the norm of

public education” (PSP2). Only two parents thought that both were similarly accountable.

Finally, three parents either did not know or were unsure of the differences in accountability between charter and public schools.

Teachers

Four of the nine teachers personally interviewed felt that both charter and public schools were similarly accountable. Three teachers admitted not knowing whether or not a difference in accountability between charter and public schools existed. Of the nine teachers interviewed, only two argued that charter schools were less accountable. “Less accountable. By far less accountable...The principal certainly can dismiss teachers and that to me is an accountability issue” (PST3).

Administrators

Three of the five administrators interviewed said that charter schools were less accountable than public schools. The other two stated that either they were unsure or simply did not know if a difference existed. “I think they’re probably more directly accountable to the parents...; In terms of accountability to the larger society, I would say it’s the other [public schools more accountable than charter schools]” (PSA5).

Focus Groups

The general consensus in the adult focus groups was that charter schools were less accountable than public schools. “Well I think they are probably accountable to their parents and that’s it” (PSFG). Another member added, “...I am not simply accountable to a group of parents, so I think the accountability is much higher for our school system. I truly do, because they don’t have to be accountable to the taxpayer, but we do” (PSFG). One adult contended that “It should be public record to disclose what they’re doing [if they’re going to use public money]”

(PSFG). Students did not know if there was a difference in accountability. “I don’t know”

(PSSFG).

Summary

Thirteen of the people interviewed maintained that public schools were more accountable than charter schools while only four thought that charter schools were more accountable. Of those interviewed, six were convinced that both were similarly accountable. A large number of participants, eight, were unsure if differences in accountability existed.

Students

QUESTION: What types of students do you think attend XYZ Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Participants were asked what types of students attended XYZ Charter School.

Parents

Ten of the parents who were interviewed claimed that parents made the decision for students to attend charter schools: “I don’t know if there are many students who would chose to [attend XYZ]. Basically I think it would be the parent’s decision” (PSP4). Of the 18 parents interviewed, three were convinced that parents who sent their children to charter schools were dissatisfied with public education. “I would suspect children who maybe find it difficult in the public system—don’t fit in or can’t cope with that curriculum...” (PSP13). Two parents contended that parents forced their children to attend charter schools,

Actually I don’t think it’s too much the students, I think it’s actually the parents, because it’s the parents that put the children in and I think it’s the parents that have the old school mentality of straight rows, desks to the front, focusing on the teacher, not so much, it’s parents I think that want to go back to the 3 R’s. They want the structured classroom teaching. (PSP18)

One parent thought that parents who could afford to send their children to XYZ were the ones who took advantage of the alternative. “Parents who have the financial ability to supply transportation” (PSP6). According to five parents, many of the students who attended XYZ were at risk. “I know for a fact some families use it when they don’t have control of their children because it’s more structured more military kind of school and they put their kids in that for someone else to teach discipline to their children” (PSP10). Three parents thought that students enrolled at charter schools were at both extremes of the continuum—bright students and those not experiencing success in public schools. “...more bad behaved kids that need to learn strict discipline, need more guidance than they might get from a class that’s filled with 30 kids and the teacher can’t devote time to them, or smart kids” (PSP8). Three of the interviewed parents maintained that the XYZ student body was probably a diverse group. “...a real mixture of kids...” (PSP11). Students who attended XYZ were more advanced, according to two parents. “...more gifted students that don’t need the extra help” (PSP2). Of the 18 parents interviewed, one thought that charter schools were for religious people. Finally, one parent claimed not to know.

Teachers

Five of the nine teachers interviewed argued that parents sent children to XYZ because they were dissatisfied with public education. “...parents (who) want more than public education is giving them” (PST7). According to four of the teachers interviewed, parents of children who attended XYZ were concerned with their children’s education. “I think they would be students of parents who want a very strict type of education, a narrow education, fundamental education of the basics and maybe they don’t want them to be too aware of more worldly issues as well” (PST3). Of the nine teachers interviewed, three thought that the XYZ student body would be diverse. “...all kinds” (PST5). Parents sent their children to charter schools for religious reasons,

according to one teacher. Finally, two teachers admitted not knowing what kinds of students attended XYZ, or charter schools in general.

Administrators

All five administrators who were interviewed were convinced that the motive for parents sending their children to XYZ was being dissatisfied with public education. "... a disgruntled group [of parents] with kids that are not achieving" (PSA1). Three administrators thought that parents enrolled their children in XYZ because they were concerned about the education of their children,

I would think they would be children of parents who are looking for solutions, the right answer. Perhaps the parents think somebody can do a better job then the people in community schools or they look back to how they were taught and think well, it worked for me so this is going to be exactly how I was taught. (PSA4)

Of the five administrators interviewed, two contended that average children attended charter schools. "...students who are very average students" (PSA2). One stated that kids at risk were also enrolled in charter schools. "It's kids that have struggled in the public education system" (PSA1).

Focus Groups

Members of the adult focus groups agreed that parents who sent their children to XYZ cared about the type of education delivered to their children. "Parents of these students really value education" (PSFG). The opinion that most of these parents were dissatisfied with public education was also supported by the adult focus groups,

They [charter school parents] have very definite ideas about what education should be. It often comes out as, and this is just looking at 10 or 15 people I know who put their children in charter schools, their child was either having difficulties, or the parent wasn't

satisfied with what the child was succeeding as quickly as they should have been....they were absolutely frustrated because the school system wasn't recognizing that this was a gifted child. (PSFG)

According to the adult focus groups, children were forced by their parents to attend charter schools. "I think their parents force them to [attend]" (PSFG). Finally, the adult focus groups agreed with those personally interviewed that children at risk attended XYZ. "I know 2 [children enrolled in XYZ Charter School] who are very behavioral and their parents make them go because it's such a strict environment" (PSFG).

Summary

Participants mainly argued that parents were the key as to what children attended XYZ. Seventeen individuals maintained that parents of children enrolled in XYZ, and probably most charter schools, wanted the best education for their children. Also, 13 people held that parents were dissatisfied with the education their children received from public schools.

Teachers

QUESTION: What types of teachers do you think are attracted to working at XYZ

Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Participants were asked what type of teacher could be found teaching at XYZ and charter schools in general.

Parents

Seven of the parents interviewed thought that teachers who chose to teach at XYZ had a specific specialization. "I would think ones that want to specialize in what their (they're) teaching" (PSP5). According to five parents, teachers in XYZ were more regimented and rigid than those in the public system. "...[B]ut I think the ones [teachers] that will be at the charter schools are ones that are more, I don't know, more regimented. They don't like the kids being

able to go up and do their own thing..." (PSP3). One parent stated, "...teachers that don't have a lot of patience, because the charter schools are very military, almost, you do it this way and that way and that's the way its going to be done and don't mess with it. So I think they're not as patient as in the public system" (PSP7).

Of the 18 parents interviewed, three felt that teachers in XYZ were disenchanted with CBE and perhaps the public system generally. "I think there are people who are tired of the larger system" (PSP1). Teachers in XYZ were new teachers, according to two parents. Two parents maintained that teachers in charter schools were committed to the particular charter espoused by the school. "They would have to be geared to the philosophy of the school" (PSP14). According to two parents, there was probably a variety of teachers in charter schools. One parent contended that teachers in charter schools were there because of the class size; one thought they were anti-union; another thought they were unqualified; and one parent was convinced they were more caring and committed. When asked if they were concerned about the fact that charter school teachers did not belong to a union, nine said that they did not care and even thought that it was a good idea. "That's a bad one to ask me about because I unfortunately belong to a union. Not by choice. I don't agree with unions so, that's my opinion. I don't like unions. I think things run smoother without them" (PSP5). Another parent said, "...sometimes here with the public school teachers union, everybody is treated the same, whether you are a good teacher or bad teacher and I don't necessarily agree with that" (PSP8). One parent thought that it was not right that charter school teachers did not belong to a union like public school teachers. "I didn't realize they weren't—they should be—they are teachers—they should be all in the same [union]" (PSP12). Of the 18 parents interviewed, five did not know what to think of charter school teachers not belonging to the Alberta Teachers' Association.

When it came to XYZ Charter School teachers using scripts, 11 of the parents disagreed with this approach to teaching,

...that [using scripts] kind of concerns me because every class is so different, the dynamics, the children, their interests, their needs, the way they learn. I think there has to be spontaneity and if you've got a script that you have to be following, I think you're missing out on a lot of great learning opportunities and teaching opportunities. (PSP1)

One parent thought "That would be like robot teaching. You could have anybody stand up there and read it....You're not getting the heart of it. You need the emotional side of it. So that sounds pretty dry" (PSP2) and another stated that "...the teacher is just being a puppet" (PSP9). Four thought it was a good idea. "[Scripts would] standardize the level of the children's education" (PSP6) and "Not for everyone, but if it works, it works" (PSP18). Two parents did not have an opinion on this topic.

Teachers

Of the nine teachers interviewed, three said that teachers in charter schools were more than likely unhappy with the public system. "...[T]here is a high degree of discontent in the public system on the part of teachers..." (PST1). One teacher added,

...teachers who are perhaps overwhelmed by lack of resources, large class sizes and a big part of where children are coming from low income or dysfunctional families. I think teachers are getting a little burned out by dealing with all these extra things they deal with and a charter school is a little more controlled, a little more follow the rules or you will be asked to leave. (PST5)

Three teachers argued that teachers with a specialization were drawn to charter schools that emphasized their specialization. "...[T]hey have a particular passion area" (PST6). According

to three of the nine teachers interviewed, teachers in XYZ Charter School were rigid individuals who favoured the regimented approach to education. "...people who really like a lot of structure, more structure than here [public schools] perhaps" (PST4). One teacher thought they were more than likely new teachers; one thought they preferred to teach in a system that controlled class size; and one teacher maintained that teachers appreciated the well-disciplined students thought to be attending charter schools. One teacher had no idea what type of teachers worked in charter schools. "I don't know. I have no idea" (PST9).

The fact that charter school teachers did not belong to the ATA, according to five teachers, was a problem. "I'm not in favor of any sort of splinter groups and I'm not in favor of teachers not belonging to the association [ATA]" (PST1). Another teacher stated, "This is a serious concern. For me it's a fragmentation of the union and it's deliberately designed that way, and I think it's happening here in Alberta, to destabilize the union, to divide it and those teachers are not protected by a union for one thing" (PST3). Two of the nine teachers saw nothing wrong with teachers not belonging to a union. "Well, just finishing a strike, it's actually a good thing" (PST7). The other one said that "I sometimes have a problem with teachers that I know should have been let go and weren't" (PST9).

Eight of the nine teachers interviewed stated that teaching from a script would not be their preferred approach to instruction. "It stifles individualism, it stifles creativity, and because of that, I think it promotes a kind of sameness and conformity that doesn't reflect the real world" (PST1). Another teacher held, "Sort of kills professionalism a bit doesn't it and creativity" (PST2). Yet another one stated, "So if you have to follow a script, you're missing out on that nice interaction with the students. You're not like a robot up there just reading something that you could just as well tape record and make the kids listen to it. You're missing that good

positive environment of interaction” (PST7). Finally, one teacher argued, “Well, I would assume by handing me a script every morning, or every week, or whatever, you’re saying that I’m not a professional. That I have no ability to be a professional” (PST9).

Administrators

Of the five administrators interviewed, two stated that teachers employed in charter schools were probably disenchanted with the public system. “...disillusioned about what is happening in our public schools...by the continually expanding class sizes, the fact that more and more we seem to have children whose needs are becoming greater and greater and greater and our resources to work with these students are diminishing...” (PSA5). According to two administrators, teachers in charter schools were new teachers. “Most of them are young and I don’t know if they’re attracted to charter schools or if they’re selected because they’re cheaper” (PSA1). Another administrator thought that “...new teachers will very often be attracted to that. First of all they don’t have any experience elsewhere and haven’t perhaps been as analytical in a philosophical way and examined their own sense of the question, what is the purpose of public education” (PSA2). Teachers in need of a job, according to two administrators, would more than likely be found teaching in charter schools. “I think people in the job market, when they are looking for a job, will take whatever they can get...” (PSA3). One administrator maintained that teachers in charter schools were probably committed to the philosophy of the charter school that employed them; one argued that teachers were attracted to the notion that students were better disciplined in charter schools; another thought that teachers in charter schools were specialized in the area offered by the specific charter school; another thought that teachers at XYZ preferred a regimented approach to education; and, finally, teachers in charter schools were drawn by class size limits.

Three of the administrators failed to see a difficulty with teachers in charter schools not belonging to a union. "...[P]arents get frustrated with bureaucracy and then the union. It's the rules they don't understand. It makes sense to protect employees and to have the right to strike but there is more flexibility in managing a charter school without unions" (PSA1). One administrator argued that "...we have some that probably shouldn't be in the profession. And what a union does sometimes is protect those teachers who maybe ought not to be there and that troubles me a little bit" (PSA5).

According to three administrators, teaching from scripts would not be the preferred approach for instruction. "I would find that very stifling... [scripts show a] lack of trust, or really lack of trust, in expecting someone to do it properly" (PSA1).

Focus Groups

The adult focus groups reinforced the notion that teachers at XYZ, and probably most charter schools, were more than likely new teachers looking for jobs. "Not necessarily where you'd rather be, it comes down to a financial decision rather than a job..." (PSFG1). This idea was supported by a member. "...I think for the most part they are very inexperienced teachers that have been selected around a criteria that I don't totally understand...so I think they are very malleable and they follow [fall] into a subscribed pedagogy and practice..." (PSFG). This group also voiced the opinion that these teachers were probably dissatisfied with the public system. "...[T]here would be a lot of satisfaction working in a charter school because all the frustrations and failures within the public system, the day to day difficulties that you have to battle with are non-existent" (PSFG). It was thought by a member of one of the adult focus groups that teachers in charter schools were committed to the philosophy espoused by the charter school that employed them. Finally, according to the focus groups teachers were probably drawn to the better disciplined students thought to be attending charter schools. "The ones that don't like

conflict. They obviously don't want to teach children with any kind of difficulties" (PSFG).

When it comes to teaching with a script the adult focus groups were opposed to this approach to instruction. "It stifles creativity...I think when you put everything into such a tight script like that I don't think you give the teachers as much opportunity to excel in what they do best and to share that with the kids" (PSFG1). Another group member stated, "...when you start reading from a script, you're completely squashing every bit of scholarly pursuit that's gone into what is good teaching about" (PSFG). And another participant contended, "I have concerns if you have scripted lessons, when do the children learn those other skills [critical thinking and problem solving]. If they see the adults, the keeper of the knowledge in front of the room reading, when do they learn to take those risks" (PSFG)?

The student focus groups felt that teachers most likely appreciated the limits imposed on class size. "I think someone who might think there would be advantages as far as a smaller classroom..." (PSSFG). Members of these groups were under the impression that charter schools were full of young teachers. "I went there once and I noticed that most of the teachers were young females" (PSSFG). One member was also under the impression that teachers in charter schools were highly qualified. "More highly qualified I supposed because if they have the top students they would need top teachers to teach them" (PSSFG). These groups thought that teachers in charter schools chose to work there because they were not made to belong to a union. They were not impressed with the fact that XYZ teachers used scripts to instruct students. "I don't like that (teaching from a script) at all. I really like, like the favorite teachers that I have had have always been, they have their own teaching style..." (PSSFG). Another member stated, "...you're going to get so bored and if they don't throw in the extra things to make it fun—like showing an example of their personal experiences..." (PSSFG).

Summary

Eleven individuals interviewed thought that teachers working in charter schools had a specialization emphasized by the charter school that employed them. Nine people argued that teachers that chose to work at XYZ were rigid in their approach and appreciated the regimented methodology espoused by XYZ. According to eight participants, teachers employed by charter schools were dissatisfied with the public system. This idea was supported by the adult focus groups. It was not an issue for fourteen interviewees that teachers employed by charter schools were not part of ATA. The student focus groups concurred. Twenty-two people did not agree with teachers teaching from scripts. Both adult and student focus groups supported this contention.

Equity

QUESTION: Do you think that the \$400 per student/year busing fee will keep some families from enrolling their children at XYZ?

The researcher, by asking a question about the busing fee of \$400 per student/year, wanted to determine if equity was an issue in enrolment in XYZ.

Parents

Seventeen parents felt that the \$400 per year per student busing fee charged by XYZ Charter School would keep some students from attending because the cost would be prohibitive, Oh, well, then, you [single mother with a part time job at Zellers] would never be able to afford it. And I know there's a transportation grant and I'm assuming that [XYZ] just takes that and doesn't give it back to the parent. So it is usually around \$400, the transportation grant, so my guess is that XYZ is keeping that and charging an extra \$400 on top of it. And the whole idea of the transportation grant is to get your kids to and from the school. That's why the government set it up in the first place. (PSP3)

One parent compared charging money for transportation to health care. “Like the health care thing sort of. If you have more money you can pay for the better stuff” (PSP3). Another parent stated that “It’s hugely inequitable already. Huge. You can take the provincial exam and chart the socioeconomic districts by the provincial exams basically. It’s already hugely inequitable” (PSP6). One parent was asked what would happen if one failed to pay a bus fee to the public school. “I believe the government or the school would [pay the fee]” (PSP12).

Teachers

Eight of the nine teachers interviewed were convinced that the \$400 per student/year busing fee paid by parents whose children attended XYZ would be too expensive for many families thereby prohibiting them from enrolling. “Have they [parents] explored that option and chosen not to because of the money involved, or have they not explored that option because of the money” (PST6). One teacher, however, did not agree that the busing fee would keep students away. “I don’t think so. If you choose to go to another school within CBE you would also be paying a busing fee” (PST8). When asked if they thought unregulated choice was equitable, most thought not. “I sincerely believe you can have choice when you have money, when you have no money you have no choice” (PST2). One teacher stated,

[t]hat’s a real hot spot with me. I have a real issue with being an educator with what I feel is a real 2-tier system. Again, if you have money, then your child will get the best.

If you’re someone who works hard for a living but haven’t got the same breaks, for some reason then society says it’s okay for your child not to get the same. (PST5)

Administrators

All five administrators stated that the \$400 per student/year busing fee charged by XYZ Charter School would definitely keep some parents from enrolling their children: “FFCA get a

per student grant for funding as well, so that's kind of upsetting [that they charge a busing fee]"

(PSA1). One administrator stated,

...there are fees attached all over the place to schooling anyway and again, the fact that parents will be in the charter and the fact that some parents will and can be in private, afford tuition fees, I think this again contributes to this potentiality of public systems becoming the default system, the place of last resort, which is to me beyond regrettable and absolutely dead wrong as far as I'm concerned about how we have to serve the needs in the public education system of everyone and to segregate by virtually those who can afford it is really problematic on an equitable access issue. (PSA2)

This sentiment was echoed by another administrator who said "...as we get a proliferation of opportunities for people it's obvious to me that the public school will be left with perhaps more people at the end that don't have the money to deal with something in a private or charter school" (PSA3). One administrator was asked about the fact that students living across the street from XYZ could possibly not be allowed to attend. The response was "...at the same time they [charter schools] tell me they're a public school and they're supported by public dollars, I think I'm going to get pretty political about that as a parent" (PSA2).

Focus Groups

Members of the adult focus groups supported the view put forth by parents, teachers, and administrators that the \$400 per year per student busing fee would automatically eliminate some students from attending XYZ. "The parent who has no money, that is on social assistance, that has very little going for them financially or socially, that [paying a \$400 busing fee] probably isn't something they would spend a lot of time thinking of" (PSFG). Student focus group

participants also corroborated with all individually interviewed individuals who argued that the \$400 per student/year busing fee would keep some students from enrolling at XYZ.

Summary

Thirty of the 32 individuals interviewed were convinced that some parents would be unable to enroll their children at XYZ because of the \$400 per student/year busing fee. Both adult and student focus groups supported this view. Only one participant thought differently.

Special Education

QUESTION: What do you think of the fact that XYZ Charter School accepts no special needs students?

After discovering through my interviews with XYZ constituents that XYZ stated that it does not accept students requiring special education services, the researcher attempted to ascertain what CBE representatives thought of this means of controlling enrolment at XYZ. Especially since it claims it's enrolment policy is first-come first-served.

Parents

Of the 18 parents interviewed, 12 argued that it was not fair that XYZ Charter School did not accept children with special needs,

I have a big problem with that. I think that any program should be able to provide an opportunity because when you say special ed you're closing such a huge, huge door....I think when you can make a choice of who you're not going to include it worries me because who's the next group that doesn't get to come in....It's public money. It's a public school. It's not a private school. It's a charter, the parents aren't paying anything, so I can see with a private school, cause you've set up that mandate, the parents are paying specifically for that. Not in a charter school, they're not paying and that's the misconception. Most people in the public sector have no idea that charter kids aren't

paying to go there. They think they're paying, so that's how come I think so many of these things are accepted, cause they think it's a private school and they can do what they want. They set it up that way. (PSP1)

Another parent said that,

...it borders on discrimination, but it all goes back to I thought they paid for the education, so now that I know that, I think that is a bit discriminating... if they're saying flat out, no we don't take any special ed, then that's not fair. If they were paying for it, that's different. But if it's public education, they can't discriminate. (PSP2)

Yet another stated, "That's not fair. That in my opinion is being very prejudicial.... You are there to help a selective group of kids, not all of them" (PSP3). And, "I think you've got to be open to who wants to come in", one parent maintained, "(i)t's a public school. That's more like a private system. If they're not private they can't really be saying no to people" (PSP4). And according to one parent, "...they're making quite an exclusive school there and maybe it's time to put them into the private system" (PSP9). "I disagree with that completely", argued one parent. "I'm all for the integration process.... They [XYZ] just basically say they only want the kids that are going to learn really easy and the rest of them they're not worth our time and that's not the way it is" (PSP10). "...[I]f that's the stance they're taking", contended one parent, "then I think they shouldn't be charter schools, they should be private schools. If they're taking tax dollars from the general fund that will just put more of the special needs kids back into the public system which is counter productive" (PSP11). Also, "I think its wrong when they call themselves a public school" (PSP13). One parent saw no problem with this policy. "I guess that's okay. If that's how they're running their school, that's fine with me" (PSP6).

Teachers

Seven of the nine teachers interviewed disagreed with the policy of XYZ to not accept children with special needs, stating that it only accepted average kids. "...[I]t would create a situation where a public school or public system would be a depository for unwanted students" (PST2). One teacher stated, "I think this is discriminatory....I can imagine they [charter schools] can discriminate on many sorts of things and this is just one of them" (PST3). And, "I don't think they can be quite public without special ed...", argued one teacher (PST4). According to one teacher, "...[T]hey [XYZ] should look at some way to integrate them [special needs children] into the school and offer them the same opportunity that all kids are offered....I don't think anybody should be turned down." (PST5). Finally, one teacher stated,

[XYZ is] [s]kimming the top layer....[XYZ] actually tests the kids and...if they don't get a certain mark, they're not in. So right away, we're looking at all our shining stars from the public system being pulled away because if you've got shining stars the parents are aware and the parents are very involved in their education and they want the best for their child....So when you are taken and segregated into a group that are all [like] minded, I don't think that's socially a good thing. (PST9)

Administrators

All five administrators were concerned about the XYZ policy of not accepting children with special needs. "That's probably been the most upsetting component of charter schools, is you want to educate all children so if you want to come up with innovative practices, let's figure out how to do it best with all children" (PSA1). According to one administrator, "...it [CBE] becomes a system of last resort or system of default for those who can either not afford the

private or for those for whom it's just too inconvenient transportation wise that would attend charter" (PSA2). One administrator lamented,

So consequently, if they [XYZ and other charter schools] take away 'regular' students from our school, all that does is tend to concentrate the special needs a little bit higher in our school, so our job becomes a little more difficult in the necessity for our teachers to be capable of dealing with that, and the diversity to be able to deal with that, to have the resources to deal with that becomes more of an issue. (PSA3)

Finally, one administrator argued, "...when you allow charter schools to siphon off very specific types of student, very often the top end, you know what it does with what's left. It's going to dilute what we have left in our system" (PSA5).

Focus Groups

A member of one of the adult focus groups stated that "It's interesting to me how charter schools get that same grant and certainly [XYZ], having met with their Board on a number of occasions admit quite frankly they don't have to deal with special needs kids because we do" (PSFG3). Another held that "...it throws off the balance of regular students with students with special needs....I know that the charter school [XYZ] has not been all that receptive to, example, students with English as a second language" (PSFG).

Students voiced their opposition to the XYZ policy of not accepting children with special needs: "I think it's unfair" (PSSFG) and "...they should just accommodate everybody..." (PSSFG).

Summary

Of the 25 participants who addressed the issue of special education, one saw no problem with the exclusionary enrolment policy of XYZ. Both adult and student focus groups were bothered by the policy.

Communitarian-Libertarian Debate

QUESTION: What is your opinion of the current debate—on the one hand, there is a group of individuals who believe individual rights should take precedence over a democratically determined common good—on the other hand you have those who think that a common good should be superior to individual rights? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The researcher attempted to engage participants in the Communitarian-Libertarian debate which impacts the whole notion of choice that is being touted as the saviour of public education by one group.

Parents

Fifteen of the parents interviewed contended that upholding a common good was more important than individual rights. “And it’s great to have choice, however, not at the expense of others. We shouldn’t be working towards the small group and sort of making sure they’re okay, we should be looking at the large group” (PSP1). Another parent stated, “You’re talking charter versus public and their rights are affecting our rights and I think we can’t take one and put it on a pedestal and the other one not because of it. That’s not right” (PSP2). Yet another said, “Everybody has to have the choice to do, but you can’t be making a choice that’s going to be affecting other people and not worry about it. Everybody has to have individual rights but you have to look at the whole community. You can’t just look for yourself” (PSP3). One parent cautioned, “Well, in order for society to exist, there has to be a common value. I think our Canadian society is in danger of losing that, because of the emphasis on individual rights” (PSP15). Finally, a parent maintained, “I think that’s getting away from what we need to have, is community—we’re becoming too self[ish], you know, focusing on the individual...” (PSP16).

According to one parent, individual rights were superior to a common good. “I suppose you should have the right to use any school you want to. I really think that’s appropriate. What you base your decision on is as individualistic as the person you are so I supposed you should have that right” (PSP10).

A balance between a common good and individual rights, according to one parent, should be the preferred approach. “I think there has to be a balance in the middle. I mean I know we have to have individual choices, but we also have to realize that individual choices do affect the larger picture so there has to be a balance in the middle” (PSP9).

Teachers

Of the nine teachers interviewed, eight considered a common good to be more appropriate for society than individual rights,

I feel very strongly in individual rights and freedoms, but I believe very, very strongly in a common good. Consequently, I’m very opposed not only to charter schools, but to private schools. I believe we’re in this together and any movement towards charter schools or privatization of schooling is designed to, not necessarily intentionally, but practically, pull us apart as opposed to bringing us together and I believe there is no problem whatsoever in achieving the greater common good without impinging on individual rights and freedoms. (PST1)

This view was supported by another teacher who stated, “Well I’m all for the common good. I like to call it social responsibility. No man’s an island. Can’t look after yourself entirely without worrying about your neighbors to some degree” (PST2). Finally, one teacher said, “So I think the common good is really what the goal is, what the common goal of the community and their opportunity in life. Individual rights are really important, but I believe that sometimes you

have to give a little in order to ensure that everybody is getting the same opportunities. So I would look at common goals, common rights” (PST5). One teacher, however, stated that a balance between the two must be struck. “But we need to find an equal balance between the two and I don’t know what that is yet” (PST7).

Administrators

Three administrators maintained that a common good should overrule individual rights. “So our work is for the common good, but you must address individual learning needs in order to best serve the common good” (PSA2). According to one administrator, a balance between individual rights and a common good is preferred. “There’s got to be a balance. You’ve got to look after the common good of people...” (PSA3). And, “What I would like to believe, would be the common good—if it was equal for everybody. Because it’s not, then individual rights” (PSA4). In other words if you are living in an individualistic capitalist society you must compete to survive. Finally, an administrator stated,

I think the common good is what we need to be concerned about. That’s why the common good, I think, is far better served within the umbrella of the public schools, but within the umbrella I still believe choices can and should be available but underlying all those choices would have to be some fundamental beliefs that are important to who we are as a society and where we want our children to go. (PSA5)

Focus Groups

Both the adult and student focus groups reinforced what most of the parents, teachers, and administrators felt when it came to a common good being superior to individual rights. A member of one of the adult focus group contended,

I think we absolutely have to look at the common good and I think that's what public education is all about. But I don't think that that means that we can't look at what is best for each individual child as well. It's finding the right balance in there. And I think that's [the common good] best done within the public education rather than having those people who want those choices going off to charter or private because those are a more selfish kind of place where children are grouped into more of a homogeneous group instead of the larger group that represents their society. (PSFG)

A comment during one of the student focus groups was that "...the common good should be served since it's education, which is the most important thing for continuing the human race..." (PSSFG). Another student claimed,

I think everyone has to have a certain level of equal opportunity or respect or whatever it is and if everyone is just off doing their own thing, as humans we often get kind of greedy, so I don't think that would work off too well. I think everyone would come together at one point and say okay, we should do this and that. (PSSFG)

Yet another student added, "I think when you are working for the common good and there is more people deciding on things you can get better ideas and just build upon things" (PSSFG).

Summary

It was nearly unanimous. All but one individual interviewed argued that the common good was as, if not more, important than individual rights. Both adult and student focus groups were in agreement. Three of these individuals, and one member of an adult focus group, would like to see a balance if possible.

Learnings

QUESTION: What can CBE schools learn from this XYZ Charter School to make them better? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

One the reasons for this study was to determine what could be learned from XYZ to improve CBE schools in particular, and public schools, generally. Consequently, this question was asked to interviewees and focus groups.

Parents

Three of the parents stated that one thing CBE schools could learn from charter schools would be to offer choice. "...[P]ublic schools I think, should learn to be a little more varied" (PSP13). According to three parents, public schools could learn more about the teaching methodologies utilized at XYZ. "...whether the public system is covering the basics in education and isn't getting too distracted to catering to diversity. That is one thing that could be learned" (PSP15). Limiting class size was something public schools could learn from XYZ according to two parents. The discipline policy employed by XYZ, maintained one parent, could be looked at by public schools. "I think public schools have veered off a little too far to the left in the discipline end of things...a little bit too much lenience" (PSP11). The fact that XYZ pushed its children harder than public schools could be another area to be looked at by public schools. The public education system has nothing to learn from XYZ according to two parents. "I'm not sure if there's anything that they need to learn. I think it's sort of the opposite and charter schools should learn" (PSP17). One parent was unsure if anything could be learned and one parent argued that public schools had already learned from XYZ. "I think they have already. Like I said, they're listening to the parents more, they're more open to suggestions from the parents" (PSP18).

Teachers

Three of the nine teachers claimed that public schools could stand to learn more about the teaching methodology employed by XYZ. "I think some of their philosophies might do good. They kind of look at the more traditional style of teaching" (PST5). Another teacher stated,

we can learn that some students do very well in a very structured sort of rote learning type of environment. I mean it's not for everyone, but some students do well in that [environment] and maybe we need to be looking at okay, what can we do in our schools to provide a similar environment for these students. To give that chance for the kids in our school to be in that similar environment. (PST7)

That choice needs to be offered to parents was something public schools could learn from charter schools according to two teachers. "The need for diverse education in our system....Not that I believe in a direct teaching [instruction]" (PST8). Public schools, declared two teachers, could learn from XYZ to limit class size,

I guess one thing public schools can, more or less demand, I mean these places are publicly funded with smaller classes of course this is a quest of public schools. I don't know whether we should be functioning with 36 in a classroom. So I don't know what we can learn from them, but we can certainly thank them [for setting a precedence] ...where we're sitting, with an enormous number of students in classrooms, their learning's are not being adequately addressed. (PST3)

One teacher thought that public schools could learn from the discipline policy utilized at XYZ, From what I've heard, they have a very strict discipline procedure and are very clear on high expectations of their kids. From my experience from being here, those expectations and consequences aren't here. At this school, a kid can swear at a teacher, and you're in talking to the principal but that's all. There aren't as serious of consequences as what would happen in a charter school if this happened a charter school could probably kick you out if you did something. Whereas in the public school they can't. (PST7)

Finally, two of the nine teachers interviewed argued that public schools had nothing to learn from XYZ and charter schools in general. “Well, I think the public system is a pretty good system. Probably a great system at one time...and I think we’re slowly eroding and I think it’s all a matter of funding and setting priorities, what’s important for the community” (PST2).

Administrators

Two of the administrators maintained that public schools could learn from charter schools to provide choices to students. “Well, I think we have to learn we aren’t the only game in town” (PSA4). One administrator stated that,

...what can be learned is what the public wants. What we need to do to better understand that, educators do not have the entire monopoly on understanding what students’ needs are and to tell a parent or to tell thousands of parents that they don’t know but we do know what students’ needs are and to deny them entirely what they truly believe is best for their child’s education is not to serve the public, which is what we are supposed to do, so we do need to pay attention. (PSA2)

Finally, two administrators maintained that public schools had already learned from charter schools:

I think we already have learned a great deal. It’s creating a school culture where people think they belong or feel they belong. I think that’s probably the biggest learning. Being focused on results is another one...Charters create a sense of belonging, a sense of purpose, and a strong sense of community. (PSA1)

Another administrator said, “I think we have learned and I think we continue to learn that we have to offer alternatives within our system....I think it’s the competition thing” (PSA2).

Finally, one administrator expressed concern over the unlevelled playing field. “Well I think we

can learn from anything ...whether we can do as well, given the clientele, under the similar circumstances, I don't think so" (PSA3).

Focus Groups

One student from one of the focus groups thought that nothing could be learned from XYZ. Another student stated that CBE could learn more about the teaching methodologies employed by XYZ. "Yes. Like past to present. Like how my parents were taught. We could do that, bring it here and see if it works better" (PSSFG).

Summary

Seven participants thought that CBE schools could learn from charter schools to offer more choice from within the system. Of those interviewed, six suggested that CBE schools could learn from the teaching methodology employed by XYZ. This view was supported by one of the student focus groups. Limiting class size was something that could be learned from XYZ according to four individuals who were interviewed. Finally, four people, as well as a member of a student focus group, argued that public schools had nothing to learn from XYZ and three maintained that public schools had already learned from XYZ.

Alberta Learning

One official from Alberta Learning was interviewed for this study. Similar questions to those posed to other participants were asked. What follows is a reporting of the interview.

Charter Schools

QUESTION: What do you know about XYZ Charter School and/or other charter schools?

The official from Alberta Learning stated that the reason for charter schools was to provide choice to parents,

Part of the charter schools' mandate is to provide a program that's already not available in the neighborhood, in the city. So they are going for a unique market niche, one that's not already occupied by the public system....The public Board responds, or can respond if they choose. Even more choice for parents....I think government has chosen a highly effective lever that pushes choice into the public system. (Alberta Learning)

The official continued to say that "Eaton's is saying to Sears, we've got something here and we're willing to share it with you. In fact, that's part of the mandate for charter schools, is to try an idea out..." (AL). "Charter schools in Alberta", the official maintained, "can't be affiliated with [a] faith group" (AL).

Changes

QUESTION: What changes do you think have been brought about in CBE schools by the existence of XYZ Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The official for Alberta Learning stated generally speaking charter schools had affected CBE schools by forcing them to be more responsive because of the competition created through offering choice to parents,

[A former superintendent with the public system] paints a picture of how charter schools provided a motivating force for him and his Boards to encourage his school principals to become more responsive to the community, listen more closely to what parents were wanting and to begin to provide programs so that students would stay with his school system rather than move over to charter schools. (AL)

He also suggested that “Some of that alternative programming [being considered by CBE] would likely be in the same kind of market niche that the charter schools are looking at” (AL).

Financial

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School has had a financial effect on CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

According to the Alberta Learning official, there was no real financial effect on public schools because of charter schools. “[T]here might be an affect on [an] individual school [that lost a student or students to a charter school]. Because they [charter schools] are under a total of 3,000 students in the whole province though, I don’t think the effect is wide-spread” (AL). Alberta Learning expended funds on charter schools by “carrying out the monitoring [and] assisting the charter school, providing advice and direction if they have questions about particular elements of legislation, if they’re having difficulty in finding accommodations...[supplying] funding [for teachers] to be members of professional development consortium...” (AL).

Accountability

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School is more accountable than, less accountable than, or similarly accountable to, CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Charter schools, argued the Alberta Learning official, were more accountable than individual public schools. “We require them [charter schools] as a school jurisdiction to provide us with a plan for what they are going to be doing in the upcoming three years. We hold school jurisdictions more accountable in Alberta than we hold individual schools accountable” (AL). The official added, “The Auditor General has criticized our Department because we haven’t

mandated that charters definitely plan and definitely report on their charter mandate” (AL).

Because of the change in the School Act, “the provincial government is the one who has responsibility for monitoring charter schools on an annual basis” (AL).

Teachers

QUESTION: What types of teachers do you think are attracted to working at XYZ

Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The official from Alberta Learning thought that there was a variety of teachers employed by charter schools. He maintained that many teachers were young and new to the profession. According to him, there were also some highly qualified teachers working at charter schools. Also, there would be, he stated, those who chose to work at a particular charter school because of its philosophy. “We have teachers who are very experienced—very gifted in fact...there are some teachers who are very interested in a particular pedagogical approach...” (AL). He was convinced that the fact that charter school teachers did not belong to the teachers union would affect who would accept and remain in positions,

I would think a teacher who has strong beliefs in collective action would not want to leave the enclave of the public or the separate school system and move into a charter school situation...they [charter school teachers] are willing to forego being members of the ATA, getting the advantages of a collective agreement, to spend their days doing exactly what they want to do and the way they want to do it. (AL)

When asked whether he thought charter schools would eliminate unions, he answered, “I think if you were to say every school was a charter school and right now our legislation says teachers cannot be members of the ATA, that would certainly do it” (AL). This was unsuccessfully

attempted in New Zealand because teachers were very upset at the thought and vehemently voiced their displeasure.

Equity

QUESTION: Do you think that the \$400 per student/year busing fee will keep some families from enrolling their children at XYZ? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

When asked about whether or not choice would increase inequities, he stated that “There will always be that kind of inequities as long as we are living in a system where people have different opportunities to earn money and retain money” (AL). However, “The State will continue to ensure their [powerless people] needs are met” (AL). He responded “absolutely” (AL) to the question if he thought that the \$400 per student/year busing fee might keep some students from attending XYZ.

Communitarian-Libertarian Debate

QUESTION: What is your opinion of the current debate—on the one hand, there is a group of individuals who believe individual rights should take precedence over a democratically determined common good—on the other hand you have those who think that a common good should be superior to individual rights? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The official stated that the government was just providing choice that was requested by the parents. “Parents have indicated very strongly to government that they want choice in where they send their children for schooling and so we look at charter schools and other mechanisms that we have available through legislation to provide choice as a means to making choice a reality for parents” (AL).

Alberta Teachers Association

An official with the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA), agreed to be interviewed and was asked similar to those posed to other participants. What follows are the responses to these questions.

Charter Schools

QUESTION: What do you know about XYZ Charter School and/or other charter schools?

The officer for ATA was convinced that charter schools were not public schools. “[I]t [XYZ Charter School] is not a public school as I see it” (Public School Union). There was a misconception, according to him, that because charter schools were funded with public money people thought they were like public schools,

...some of the different charter schools that we have [in Alberta] are thinly veiled religious schools although extensively they’re an English as a second language school, the fact that virtually every student in that school comes from the same cultural background and the same broad stream within one major religion. (PSU)

Finally, the official stated that “some of the [reasons] for charter schools are probably inappropriate” (PSU).

Changes

QUESTION: What changes do you think have been brought about in CBE schools by the existence of XYZ Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

According to the ATA official, charter schools had resulted in the public system opening a school similar to XYZ. Also, it had infused competition into education,

One of the key factors in terms of how the Board [CBE] has responded to it is they see charter schools being competitors to schools. In doing so, frankly our Board has begun to

carry out some competitive behavior, creating programs that are very similar to those being offered by particular charter schools and XYZ comes to mind because our Board has now developed what they call a Traditional Learning Centre, which would be featuring direct instruction. (PSU)

Diversity

QUESTION: Do you think that the presence of XYZ Charter School has affected the diversity of schools for parents to choose from? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

Charter schools, according to the ATA officer, had caused more diversity in the public system. "...[O]ur Board is responding to some of the challenges of the charter schools and private schools by developing alternative programs that mirror the competitors outside of the public system" (PSU).

Responsiveness

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School has affected the responsiveness of CBE schools to the needs of parents? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The officer was not convinced that charter schools had made public schools more responsive. "I would be somewhat more skeptical on that" (PSU).

Financial

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School has had a financial effect on CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

There was no doubt in the ATA official's mind that charter schools impacted public schools financially. "Well certainly if it takes students from the public system that creates a

position where we're not growing, that has an impact in terms of not being able to hire additional teachers, of creating surplus situations where teachers have to move along" (PSU).

Accountability

QUESTION: Do you think that XYZ Charter School is more accountable than, less accountable than, or similarly accountable to CBE schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The official stated that the accountability of charter schools was different than that for CBE schools. "It's a very different accountability when you have a school that has a largely upper middle class clientele who are very advantaged socially" (PSU) especially when success is judged solely by standardized tests results.

Students

QUESTION: What types of students do you think attend XYZ Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

According to the ATA official, students were likely to come from homes where the parents were dissatisfied with their present school and/or favour direct instruction.

Teachers

QUESTION: What types of teachers do you think are attracted to working at XYZ Charter School? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The official thought that teachers were probably committed to the philosophy of the charter school in which they taught. "Well clearly for those schools that are built around very significant pedagogical or social principle, they (teachers) would be people who share those values..." (PSU). Another type of teacher that could be found in charter schools, maintained the official, was one that was specialized. The person also stated that teachers in charter schools

were probably recent graduates, in need of a job, or retired. Smaller class sizes in charter schools, the official contended, was another appealing condition that would attract teachers.

According to the official, scripted instruction was an attack on professionalism,

I believe it makes it difficult to be professional. Professionals by their nature advocate on behalf of their clients and diagnose the needs of their clients and choose an appropriate course of treatment....If you are reading from a prepared script, I don't see how you engage in diagnosis. I don't see how you can say you are meeting the needs of your client, unless you presume that every client is identical and has exactly the same needs. There may well be students who require forms of direct instruction, but I would want to develop that as a program for that student rather than simply do it as a matter of course.

(PSU)

Teachers in charter schools were not allowed to be part of the union, the official asserted.

"Because of the legislative restriction in the ATA, we cannot have full members from charter schools" (PSU).

Equity

QUESTION: Do you think that the \$400 per student/year busing fee will keep some families from enrolling their children at XYZ? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The ATA official maintained that the \$400 busing fee would keep some kids away because "(i)t would be a financial burden on some families" (PSU).

Special Education

QUESTION: What do you think of the fact that XYZ Charter School accepts no special needs students? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The fact that XYZ Charter School did not accept children with special needs because it catered to “average children” did not impress the ATA official. “...(I)t would certainly make things easier if you did not have to meet the needs of those students that have special needs. Again, that’s not the mandate for public education. Public education is to meet the needs of all students, not a select group” (PSU). There were competitions for “high value” students. “Those are students who score well on standardized tests, don’t require a lot of additional resources and are largely compliant with the institutional structure that you’ve created...if you can skim off the students you want, you increase the proportion of other students within the (CBE) system” (PSU). A vicious circle develops, according to the official, as the proportion of special needs students increases in public schools so does the departure of the most able students.

Learnings

QUESTION: What can CBE schools learn from this XYZ Charter School to make them better? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

The official maintained that no matter what was offered there would be takers. “I think they can learn that if you offer a traditional program regardless of its merits on the basis of human learning, people will come and take advantage of it. Our teachers will volunteer to teach there” (PSU).

Summary of Data

For this study, 48 individuals participated in personal interviews. From XYZ Charter School, there were six administrators, three teachers, and five parents. Five administrators, nine teachers, and eighteen parents from the three CBE schools were personally interviewed. Finally, one official from Alberta Learning and one from the Alberta Teachers

Association took part. The results of the interviews and focus groups are summarized in **Table 1** on page 198 and **Table 2** on page 199.

Parents

Five charter school parents and 18 CBE parents, six from three different schools, were interviewed. All five charter school parents thought that XYZ had forced CBE to be more diverse whereas less than one-half, eight, CBE parents agreed, and as many disagreed. Only one XYZ parent thought that CBE had not become more responsive because XYZ's existence; one-half of the CBE parents thought otherwise. Two XYZ parents stated that their school had a financial effect on CBE schools compared to 15 public school parents. No XYZ parents considered XYZ to be less accountable than CBE schools while eight CBE parents thought that to be the case. Seventeen of 18 CBE parents were convinced that the \$400 per student/year busing fee would automatically eliminate some parents from enrolling their children at XYZ. Two XYZ parents agreed with this assessment. All five XYZ parents maintained that average students attended their school while 10 public school parents argued that XYZ parents had a particular concern for their children's education. Three out of five XYZ parents thought that teachers at XYZ, and charter schools generally, agreed with the school philosophy and were young or new to the profession. While three of 18 CBE parents were of the opinion that teachers at XYZ, and in charter schools in general, were most likely dissatisfied with CBE schools, if not all public schools.

Nine CBE parents were not bothered by the fact that teachers employed by XYZ were not part of the ATA while one XYZ parent thought that not being able to be an ATA member might influence who applied to work and remained there. According to 11 public school parents,

Table 1

Summary of Responses to Interview Questions

Item	XYZ Charter School					3 CBE Schools					ATA	AL	XYZ	CBE	Total
	Par	Tea	Adm	Afg	Stg	Par	Tea	Adm	Afg	Sfg					
Changes in General															
copycat school	1	3	5	*	*			3	*		1		9	3	13
reevaluation by CBE	3		1					5	*				4	5	9
CBE will change	1	1	2	*									4	0	4
no effect		1	2			4	2	1		*			3	7	10
existence long enough -Y		1				3	1						1	4	5
-N		1	2			1	6						3	7	10
XYZ Students															
high-achieving parents		2	5		*	10	4	3	*	*	1		7	17	25
dissatisfied with CBE						3	5	5	*		1		0	13	14
average students	5	2	5	*	*			2					12	2	14
diverse						3	3			*			0	6	6
kids at risk	3	2	2		*	5		1	*	*			7	6	13
ethnic	3	2	4	*									9	0	9
XYZ Teachers															
in need of jobs	2	1	5					2	*		1		8	2	11
new/young	3	1	3	*		2	1	2	*	*	1	1	7	5	14
dissatisfied with system	2	2	3			3	3	2	*				7	8	15
committed to philosophy	3	3	6	*		2		1	*		1	1	12	3	17
use of script -good	3	1	3			4							7	4	11
-bad	1	1				11	8	3	*	*	1		2	22	25
-unsure						2							0	2	2
specialized						7	3	1			1		0	11	12
rigid/regimented						5	3	1					0	9	9
nonunion-employment -Y	3	1	2			1	5				1	1	6	6	14
-N	1	2	1	*		9	2	3		*			4	14	18
-unsure	1		1			5							2	5	7
Learnings															
direct instruction	4	1	4	*	*	3	3			*			9	6	15
discipline policy	4	1	2		*	1	1						7	2	9
parental involvement	3		3	*				1					6	1	7
accountable to parents	1	2	3	*									6	0	6
class size	1					2	2						1	4	5
provide choice		1	1	*		3	2	2			1		2	7	10
nothing						2	2						0	4	4

Table 2
Summary of Responses to Interview Questions

Item	XYZ Charter School					3 CBE Schools					ATA	AL	XYZ	CBE	Total
	Par	Tea	Adm	Afg	Sfg	Par	Tea	Adm	Afg	Sfg					
More Diverse															
Yes	5	3	5	*		8	5	3	*		1		13	16	30
No						8	2	1					0	11	11
Unsure						2							0	2	2
More Responsive															
Yes	2	1	5	*	*	5	5	4					8	14	22
No	1	1				9	1	1	*		1		2	11	14
Unsure	2	1				2	3						3	5	8
Accountability															
More	2	2	4	*		4					1		8	4	13
Less						8	2	3	*				0	13	13
Same		1	1			2	4						2	6	8
Unsure	3					3	3	2		*			3	8	11
Inequitable															
Yes	2	2	3	*	*	17	8	5	*	*	1	1	7	30	39
No	3	1	2				1						6	1	7
Financial Effect															
Yes	2	2	4	*		15	8	5	*		1	1	8	28	38
No	3	1					1						4	1	5
Unsure			1			3							1	3	4
C-L Debate															
common good						15	8	3	*	*	1		0	26	27
individual rights						1						1	0	1	2
balance						1	1	1	*				0	3	3
No Special Ed															
not opposed						1							0	1	1
opposed						12	7	5	*	*	1		0	24	25

having teachers teaching from scripts, as was the case at XYZ, was not the preferred methodology. This view was supported by one XYZ parent whereas four XYZ parents saw no problem with teachers using scripts and did not think that this was an attack on the professionalism of teachers.

When it came to what public schools could learn from XYZ, four of the five charter school parents stated that public schools could learn more about the teaching methodology—direct instruction—embraced by XYZ. Only three CBE parents concurred. Another large discrepancy was in the area of discipline where four XYZ parents thought that public schools should employ similar discipline policies to theirs. One CBE parent agreed with this assertion. Finally, three XYZ parents and one CBE parent contended that CBE schools could learn how to better involve parents from XYZ.

CBE parents were also concerned that charter schools were taking some of the top students from their schools. They were bothered by the fact that XYZ stated in its charter that it did not accept special education students. CBE parents felt that this would mean that there would be a higher proportion of students left in public schools that were in need of special assistance. They believed that although individuals deserved to have choices and rights these should not be at the expense of the common good which can be best served by public schools. Finally, one CBE parent stated, “Those parents that send their kids there [XYZ] really care about their kids so those parents who could be helping out here at our school, being part of our parent council and volunteering here, are helping somewhere else instead. So it’s drawing [from public schools]” (PSP9).

Teachers

For this study, three teachers employed by XYZ and nine by CBE, three from each of three schools, were interviewed. At the outset, interviewees were asked to talk about changes they perceived being made in CBE schools due to XYZ. All three XYZ teachers stated that the biggest proof of change brought about by XYZ's existence was CBE's intention to open a facility similar to XYZ—The Traditional Learning Centre. No CBE teacher mentioned this. However, six of nine CBE teachers felt that XYZ had not been in operation long enough to judge its influence, compared to one XYZ teacher. Also, five CBE teachers felt that XYZ had a financial effect on CBE schools. No XYZ teacher offered that XYZ affected CBE schools financially.

All three XYZ teachers argued that XYZ had caused CBE to be more diverse while just over half, five, of the CBE teachers agreed. Five CBE teachers maintained that CBE schools were more responsive to the needs and desires of parents because of XYZ and other charter schools. One XYZ teacher concurred. Clearly the financial effects of XYZ were a concern for eight of the nine CBE teachers. Also, two of the three XYZ teachers admitted to the financial effect their school had on CBE schools. Another area of strong agreement between both groups of teachers is equity. According to two XYZ and eight CBE teachers, the \$400 per student/year busing fee would definitely limit enrolment. Two XYZ teachers contended that XYZ was more accountable than CBE schools but not one CBE teacher was in accord with this opinion. However, two CBE teachers thought that XYZ was less accountable, four thought that they were the same, and three were unsure of the difference if there was one.

The only agreement among CBE teachers about the type of student found at XYZ was that the students and their parents are dissatisfied with public education. Five CBE teachers

offered this view while no XYZ teachers concurred. Obviously, XYZ teachers had stronger opinions about their students. Two of three teachers maintained that the students were average, some of them considered “at risk”, and had parents who wanted the best education for their children.

All three XYZ and no CBE teachers stated that teachers at XYZ, and most likely all charter schools, chose to work there because they agreed with the school philosophy. According to eight of nine CBE teachers, teaching from a script was not their preferred method of instruction and was an attack on professionalism. One XYZ teacher agreed with this assertion. Finally, five CBE and one XYZ teacher contended that the inability of XYZ teachers to be members of ATA would affect who applied to teach and stay at XYZ.

That CBE, and all public schools for that manner, could learn more about XYZ’s philosophy, was declared by two out of three XYZ teachers with no agreement from CBE teachers. Also, two XYZ teachers insisted that CBE schools could learn to be more accountable to parents like XYZ. Again, no CBE teacher mentioned this as something to learn.

For the most part CBE teachers were solidly behind public education and firmly believed in a democratic state with an established common good. Many were saddened by the condition of public education partly caused by underfunding, the establishment of charter schools, and the expansion of private schools. They fear a two-tiered education system similar to the two-tiered healthcare system promoted by their provincial government. All felt that the students who were more academically successful were leaving public schools and taking their share of public education funding with them. Not allowing special needs children to enroll was in effect saying by implication that XYZ parents do not want their “children’s education to be compromised by children with special needs that might require more of a teacher’s time” (PST1). According to

one CBE teacher, “(t)o start a school with a very elitist mandate [no special education services] certainly makes things easier than when you start to compare the results of a school such as that with our school that has a huge special needs population and that’s the comparison that’s been made in the public” (PST6). There was a feeling that XYZ, and other charter schools, tried to filter out the students that take up more time thereby increasing the gap that exists between the haves and have-nots. Finally, one teacher echoed an opinion given by CBE parents of losing involved parents to charter schools. “I hate to loose lots of those highly involved families in a school such as ours where we need more highly involved families. You know, having the right building blocks” (PST6).

Administrators

The researcher interviewed six XYZ and five CBE administrators. From XYZ the researcher interviewed three in-school administrators, two central office personnel, and one board member. From CBE, three in-school administrators, one each from three different schools, one central office person, and one trustee were interviewed by the researcher. When asked to state changes brought about by the existence of XYZ, all five XYZ administrators pointed to the planned opening by CBE of a “copycat” school called the Traditional Learning Centre as proof of change on the part of CBE. Three of five CBE administrators were in agreement with this assertion. Five CBE administrators held that CBE was reevaluating its programs and services because of charter schools. Only one XYZ administrator concurred. There was agreement between both groups of administrators on diversity, responsiveness, and equity. Five XYZ and three CBE administrators agreed that XYZ had increased diversity within CBE. According to five XYZ and four CBE administrators, CBE was more responsive to parents than it was before XYZ was in operation. That XYZ has had a financial effect on CBE

was attested to by all CBE and four XYZ administrators. The \$400 per student/year busing fee would immediately disallow some parents from enrolling their children at XYZ, according to five CBE and three XYZ administrators. One area of difference was accountability. Four XYZ administrators insisted that XYZ, and charter schools in general, were more accountable than CBE, and public schools generally. On the other hand, of the five CBE administrators interviewed, three argued that XYZ was less accountable than CBE schools.

When it came to the type of student that attended XYZ, there were more differences of opinions than agreements. The closest accord was that parents who sent their children to XYZ wanted the best education for them. This was attested to by five XYZ and three CBE administrators. On the other hand, five XYZ and two CBE administrators stated that average children attended XYZ. Another difference was that five CBE administrators insisted that parents who sent their children to XYZ were dissatisfied with CBE schools, or maybe all public schools. No XYZ administrator agreed with this opinion.

Five XYZ and two CBE administrators held that some of the teachers employed by XYZ were there because they needed a job. According to one CBE administrator and five XYZ administrators, teachers at XYZ were mainly there because they were committed to the XYZ philosophy.

It was the opinion of most CBE constituentss that they had nothing to learn from XYZ. In one case, four XYZ administrators insisted that CBE could learn more about the teaching methodology—direct instruction—employed at XYZ. No CBE administrators concurred with this assertion.

One administrator offered, “Yeah, it would be nice to have 12 more [students enrolled], but you know, I don’t want to have 12 dissatisfied families here. I mean, the amount of dollars that they bring in, it’s not going to make a difference in how this school runs” (PSA4).

When asked if charter schools were accountable to anybody for students they kicked out, one CBE administrator answered, “No, so think of expulsions or suspensions or discipline problems. We need to take them in and educate them....They can suspend and expel students” (PSA1). Concerns were raised about XYZ’s admissions policy: “...[I]t just doesn’t fit with the philosophical base of public education and that does concern me” (PSA4). One CBE administrator admitted to firmly supporting public education and to being forced to compete by opening a school similar to XYZ.

Although another CBE administrator (PSA2) believed in equity and the common good, she claimed she would not hesitate going after programs that would benefit her school and her students. The injection of competition into Alberta had caused CBE to divert funds, that were already insufficient, into advertising: “It bugs me, but at the same time it [advertising] has to happen. The enrollment in the public schools has depreciated and we need to sell the system. It is a business as much as we don’t want it to be—and we need to get an interest in our school and that’s how you have to do it now. Personally I don’t know how it can get out to the public without doing that” (PST5).

XYZ Charter School vs Calgary Board of Education

The above data would suggest that by and large the two groups of individuals, XYZ and CBE representatives, could be divided into two groups—libertarians and communitarians. XYZ constituents viewed education as a commodity or a service and very strongly held that parents should have a choice as to where they sent their children to school. Most XYZ representatives were convinced that CBE was failing their children and that competition was the only remedy for

this deplorable situation. After all, the education of their children, and not all children, was of paramount importance.

On the other hand, most CBE constituents believed strongly in a common good and that public education was the most effective means of determining and realizing this common good. They viewed education as a public good and not as a commodity like their XYZ counterparts. This group felt that parents should stay in the public system and fight for improvements instead of “fleeing” the ailing CBE system for the sake of their own children at the expense of other children. The conclusion was that they were generally philosophically divided.

In answer to the general question on changes in CBE due to XYZ, nine of the 14 XYZ participants, supported by both adult and student focus groups, contended that the most glaring proof of change on the part of CBE was CBE’s planned opening of a “copycat” school—the Traditional Learning Centre. Meanwhile, 27 of the 32 CBE participants insisted that XYZ had a financial effect on CBE schools.

When it came to increased diversity in CBE because of XYZ, 13 of 14 XYZ interviewees contended that CBE was more diverse because of the existence of XYZ, while only one-half, 16, of CBE representatives were in agreement. In the area of responsiveness the results were less clear as eight XYZ participants maintained that CBE had been more responsive to the needs and desires of parents. Less than one-half of CBE interviewees concurred with this assertion. Eight of 14 XYZ individuals who were interviewed thought that XYZ’s existence had a financial effect on CBE schools. However, 29 of 32 CBE interviewees insisted that XYZ had a financial effect on CBE schools.

Eight XYZ participants held that XYZ was more accountable than CBE schools while 13 of 32 CBE constituents were convinced that XYZ was less accountable than CBE schools. Both

sides admitted that accountability was different because XYZ was directly accountable to parents of those attending while CBE was accountable to the public at large. Partly, because of this difference, three of 14 XYZ participants and eight of 32 CBE interviewees were unsure as to who was more accountable.

When it came to the type of student most likely to be found at XYZ, twelve XYZ representatives held that students enrolled in their school were of average ability. On the other hand, seventeen CBE participants thought that students enrolled in XYZ had parents who cared about their education and 13 CBE interviewees were convinced that parents whose children attended XYZ were dissatisfied with CBE schools and maybe public schools in general.

Twelve XYZ interviewees insisted that teachers employed at XYZ were committed to the school philosophy, eight maintained that some of the teachers simply needed a job, and seven stated that some of the teachers were dissatisfied with public education. Eleven of the 32 CBE constituents interviewed thought that teachers in charter schools chose to work there because the school's specialty was their specialty as well, nine contended that teachers at XYZ preferred a regimented approach to education, and eight were convinced that teachers at XYZ, and maybe all charter schools, were disenchanted with public education.

Only one-half of XYZ participants thought that the \$400 per student/year busing fee would eliminate some parents from enrolling their children at XYZ. Conversely, 30 of 32 CBE interviewees argued that the bus fee would definitely keep some families away. Twenty-four CBE constituents interviewed were clearly upset by the fact that XYZ refused to accept children in need of special education services. One CBE interviewee was in agreement with this regulation.

As to what could be learned by CBE from XYZ, nine XYZ interviewees stated that CBE could learn about direct instruction from XYZ, seven maintained that CBE could learn about XYZ's discipline policy, and six thought that CBE could learn how to involve parents like XYZ. Seven CBE participants were convinced that CBE could learn to offer choice for parents within the system and six thought that CBE could learn more about direct instruction.

Summary Reflections

When asked the general question about the changes brought about in public schools because of the existence of XYZ, the most common answer, supplied by 13 of the 48 participants and supported by XYZ and CBE focus groups and the XYZ student focus group, was the opening of the Traditional Learning Centre by CBE. Ten individuals did not think that XYZ had been in existence long enough to determine what changes, if any, had been brought about in CBE schools. Also, 10 participants argued that XYZ had had no effect on CBE schools. Finally, nine people maintained that CBE had begun to evaluate its programs because of charter schools.

Of the 48 individuals interviewed, 39 maintained that the \$400 per student/year busing fee would automatically eliminate some parents from enrolling their children at XYZ. This view was supported by XYZ and CBE adult and student focus groups. Thirty-eight participants were convinced that XYZ had had a financial effect on CBE schools, which was corroborated by XYZ and CBE adult focus groups. Thirty participants felt that CBE was more diverse thanks to the existence of XYZ.

Of the 32 CBE participants, 26 favoured a common good over individual rights. This opinion was shared by the CBE adult and student focus groups and by the ATA official. Twenty-four CBE contributors were not impressed by the fact that XYZ did not accept special

needs students. This was corroborated by the CBE adult and student focus groups and ATA official.

When it comes to the type of students enrolled at XYZ, 25 of the interviewees contended that they came from families that wanted the best education for their children. This view was supported by the CBE adult focus groups and by the CBE and XYZ student focus group. Fourteen individuals, as well as the XZY adult and student focus groups, maintained that the students were of average ability. Also, 14 people argued that parents who enrolled their children in XYZ were dissatisfied with CBE and maybe all public schools. Members of the CBE adult focus groups also held this opinion.

Twenty-five of the interviewees were not impressed with the use of scripts by teachers at XYZ and thought that this was an attack on the professionalism of teachers. This opinion was supported by CBE adult and student focus groups. Of the 48 participants, 18 did not think that not belonging to a union would affect who would apply to teach and remain at XYZ. The XYZ adult focus group and the CBE student focus groups agreed with this assessment. Seventeen individuals and the XYZ and CBE adult focus groups stated that teachers at XYZ would probably be committed to the philosophy of the school. Another 15 people, as well as a CBE adult focus group, thought that teachers employed in charter schools were unhappy with the public education system, and 14 thought they were young or new to teaching. This was attested to by the XYZ adult focus group and both CBE adult and student focus groups. That teachers with specializations were attracted to charter schools was attested to by 12 participants and, finally, of those interviewed 11 maintained that teachers employed at XYZ, and in charter schools generally, were there because they needed a job.

Fifteen contributors insisted that CBE could learn more about direct instruction from XYZ and 10 maintained that CBE could also learn from XYZ to offer more choice within the system.

One teacher (PST1) mentioned that charter schools was another “right wing” idea that had come from the States to which Calgary was closely tied. CBE participants were concerned that XYZ, and other charter schools, did not have to follow the same regulations as did CBE. “They’re not judged on the School Act. They’re judged on their charter....They keep trying to tell us they’re public schools, well, how? Well, they use public money. I know that much” (PSFG). Many people considered this to be an “unleveled playing field” (PSFG). It was a common opinion among CBE participants that XYZ’s accountability is to itself and its parent council and board and not necessarily to the public in general. “It’s kind of a closed door situation as far as I can tell” (PSP11).

“I look at them (XYZ) as a private school, publicly funded catering to special interest groupsThey are selective by the very nature of what they state they offer and that of course to me is not accessible education for everyone in an equitable way” (PST3). A member of one of the CBE adult focus groups stated, “I think one of the things that has happened is, there is a perception that charter schools are better than the public school systems and part of that is because charter schools say they’re better. I think they’re a very good marketer, and they need to be” (PSFG).

It was thought by many CBE participants that XYZ could control its population, partly through the use of an exam. Another method used by XYZ to control its populace was, according to CBE participants, through asking students to leave. “I’d like to see what their

criteria of being able to expel that child compared to what [public schools have to follow]...”(PSFG).

Another area of concern was the inequitable nature of XYZ’s busing fee. The Alberta Learning official was surprised to learn of the charge because “(w)e provide transportation funding to charter schools....The same level as the public system” (AL). This concern for the amount charged for busing by XYZ, in light of the busing grants received from Alberta Learning, was also expressed by a CBE administrator (PSA1). Parents at XYZ could ask for final assistance for busing. Nothing happens to parents in CBE schools if they fail to pay for busing. “Yeah, there’s 71 parents alone in this school that haven’t paid their busing fees” (PSFG). The researcher wonders what would happen if 71 parents at XYZ did not pay their fees.

Cougar Jr. High had a place for parents to sign agreeing to encourage their children to use the agenda. If parents refused to sign and did not encourage their children to use the agenda, would they be asked to leave the school? What would happen at XYZ, and perhaps all charter schools, if a parent or student refused to do what was required of them? Should charter schools be accountable to Alberta Learning in terms of admittance and dismissal policies? Should expelling a student not be handled the same way in charter and public schools if charter schools are public schools as proponents claim?

The last word goes to a CBE teacher. “I see education in a democratic society having a very fundamental place in disseminating not only information of course, but critically analyzing questions, values and belief systems and everything else in a society” (PST3). This is most likely to happen in a public school system.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The last chapter of this document begins with a summary of the research findings that shows both sides of the argument regarding charter schools were proven to be correct. Before returning to the micro and macro debates, a discussion of the composition of the New Right, the group firmly committed to libertarian beliefs of individual choice and competition, takes place.

Much of the research is American even though there are some contextual differences between Albertan and U.S. education systems. For example, the constitutional positioning of education differs in Canada and the U.S.: it's under provincial jurisdiction in Canada and not under the same local-state-federal framework of the U.S. Also, it must be remembered that Catholic public schools are considered to be private schools in the U.S., thereby unfunded by government, because of the U.S.'s policy of separating church from state. However, as I reported earlier, an exception was recently granted to fund Catholic schools through a voucher program in Milwaukee. I included the American literature because of the U.S.'s close integration with Canada and because it is the birth place of charter schools. Regulations binding charter schools are similar in U.S. and Alberta. In addition, the political-economic thought that is prevalent in the U.S. is also prevalent in Alberta. This similarity has yielded comparable actions in the reformation of schools. Alberta is not the only province in Canada flirting with deregulation and privatization of education. Ontario has recently instituted a tax cut for families with children enrolled in private schools through a tax credit system.

This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the micro debate—charter schools—where the voices of experts on the topic, study participants, and myself are woven to put forth the

implications of the findings from the study. The connection between the micro debate and the macro debate is explained in the section on the communitarian-libertarian debate. Alternatives to unregulated school choice are provided with an invigorated “democracy” touted by many as one of the key ingredients for improving CBE schools, and for that matter, all public schools. Recommendations are offered for further research and for practice. Finally, this chapter concludes with closing statements about the findings from the study and how they inform the macro debate.

The purpose of this study was, in the context of the communitarian-libertarian debate, to obtain the perceived effects of a charter school on three selected public schools. Would these effects improve public education and/or lead to more charter schools? All schools were in Calgary, Alberta. A qualitative case study approach was utilized because it allowed me to perform an in-depth study of a phenomenon from the perspective of the participants involved. I was allowed access to a situation not normally open to me and am, ideally, contributing an insight into a local, and global, issue. I made an attempt to relate my findings to other research findings in the literature. One of my the goals was to write in such a way that enhanced the understanding of reader. Obviously, it is hoped that the reader can grasp the proof and arrive at the same conclusions. At the same time, it is the responsibility of others to reject, revise, and redefine my findings, implications, and conclusions. It was a chance to discover what others had not and make “an advocacy for those things [I] cherish” (Stake, 1995, p. 136). But most importantly, it permitted me to further my arguments about issues important to me, and in so doing, make a difference.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was, in the context of the communitarian-libertarian debate at the macro level, to obtain the perceived impact of a charter school, at the micro level, on three

selected public schools in Calgary, Alberta. What follows are answers to the following questions posed at the outset of the study:

1. What impact does a charter school in Calgary, Alberta have on three selected public schools as perceived by participants, both proponents and opponents of charter schools?

Proponents claimed that charter schools increase diversity of choice and responsiveness to the needs of parents and are more accountable than public schools. Thirty of the 48 individuals participating in the study claimed that the existence of charter schools has caused a greater diversity of choice for parents in Calgary. It is obvious that charter schools have “shaken the system” because CBE has implemented four alternative programs in the last year to “compete” with charter schools, and for that matter, private schools: (1) The Traditional Learning Centre, modeled after XYZ Charter School; (2) Cbe-learn, a virtual senior high (with junior high to follow in September 2004); (3) Alice Jamieson Girls’ Academy (grades 4-9); and, (4) Juno Beach, Academy of Canadian Studies. Two new charter schools have opened in Calgary since I concluded my study in April 2002: (1) Calgary Arts Academy (elementary) and (2) Calgary All Girls’ School (grades 4-9). A question in need of further study is: who benefits from this increased diversity?

Whether or not CBE was more responsive to the needs of parents, according to study participants, was less clear. Less than half, 22, of those involved in the study thought that CBE was more responsive to parents. Eight of 14 representatives from XYZ considered CBE to be more responsive. However, 14 of 32 people interviewed from CBE schools thought that CBE was more responsive to parents because of charter schools operating in Calgary. Some individuals stated that CBE was always responsive and others noted that they perceived no

change in the level of responsiveness. Questions in need of further study are: Who is CBE and AL responding to? Are they responding to all parents or to a select few?

As for the issue of accountability, eight of the 14 XYZ participants felt that XYZ was more accountable than, and two thought XYZ was similarly accountable to, public schools. According to one XYZ teacher, XYZ was “equally accountable, more scrutinized, because we are by nature, different than a public school, we have to prove our results” (CST1). Many participants recognized the fact that accountability for charter schools was different than that for public schools.

Opponents claimed that charter schools adversely affect public schools financially, “cream” off students who are experiencing academic and behavioural success in public schools, and are less accountable than public schools. Without a doubt, according to 38 of the 48 participants, charter schools have had an unfavorable financial effect on public schools. Once participants understood that education money followed students, most people agreed that CBE was affected financially.

The claim that charter schools cream off students who are successful was not substantiated by participants until I asked CBE representatives about XYZ’s refusal to admit children with special needs. Twenty-four of the 32 CBE individuals interviewed considered this to be unfair because public schools would be left with all of the students requiring extra attention.

When it came to addressing the question whether or not XYZ, in particular, and charter schools, in general, were more or less accountable than CBE schools, it became clear that the accountability was different. Although XYZ received public money it was only accountable to the parents who enrolled their children while CBE schools were accountable to the public at

large. “So their accountability is maybe, to a small group of people, although everybody’s money is going there to help them, I think a lot of people are unaware that they are putting money into that charter school as well as the public school their child attends” (PST5). Another CBE teacher thought that XYZ was less accountable because it could turn down and expel students who did not fit the mould, whereas in the public system teachers examined what they were providing and made necessary changes to meet the needs of these students. “There isn’t the option of saying, well that child just doesn’t fit here” (PST6).

2. What can be learned from this charter school that could help to improve the public education system?

XYZ representatives, when asked what could be learned from their school, contended that CBE could learn more about: (1) increasing parent involvement in its schools; (2) the XYZ discipline policy; (3) direct instruction; and, (4) smaller class sizes. However, XYZ parents were forced to be involved while public school parents were encouraged to participate; XYZ was allowed to determine who was admitted and expelled away from the public eye, while public schools accepted all students living in their catchment area and adhered to the School Act in terms of expulsions; and, finally, XYZ could limit its class size while CBE schools lacked this ability. Of the four suggestions the only one that could be implemented by CBE schools was direct instruction. Many CBE participants pointed out these differences to prove that they were forced to compete on an “unleveled” playing field. How these findings inform the micro, and, therefore, the macro debates is reported in the remainder of this chapter.

Micro Debate—Charter Schools

There are those who contended that schools could only be improved through unregulated choice and competition. Others maintained that unregulated competition among schools would

cause further inequities and the course of action should be to democratize public schools. As stated previously, this micro debate is part of a larger, macro debate, between individuals that claim that personal choice and individualism should supercede any common good or collective action. Proponents of charter schools clearly fall into the libertarian camp; proponents of strengthening public education are communitarian in their beliefs. What follows is a discussion about charter schools that combines information gleaned from the literature and comments made by people involved in the study. Areas addressed include labour process theory, the inequitable character of charter schools in terms of streaming, knowledge of the existence of XYZ and charter schools in general, admissions/expulsion policies that differ from public schools, busing, class size, and parental involvement, and whether or not charter schools are more like public schools or private schools.

Wells, Lopez, Scott, and Holme (1999), in their study of 10 California charter schools, stated that there were multiple realities of charter school reform.

At the one end of the continuum are arguments that this reform is the beginning of the end of public education system as we know it, and at the other end are assertions that charter schools are part of a much larger effort to revitalize this very system. In between is the belief that public education is doomed without the dramatic system-wide changes that charter schools can foster. (p. 531)

It is safe to say that the continuum exists for proponents of Alberta charter schools as well. According to a public school focus group participant, the whole motivation behind charter schools, “going back to 1993 and prior to that, it’s the government looking at ways to reduce the cost of education. If they can get other people involved, i.e., companies, to start funding some of those capital costs” (PSFG). A change to the Alberta Education Act was to

replace the word “person” with the word “company” for who was permitted to approach Alberta Learning with a charter school proposal. Premier Klein’s recent release of a “trial balloon” suggested the province move toward a voucher system for program delivery, a move that would funnel more public money into private schools.

Another public school focus group member maintained that when the original charter of legislation was written charter schools were supposed to be some sort of “incubus of research and then the rest of the public education system was supposed to benefit from that” (PSFG). Although equity was not part of the original conception of the study, it became apparent while conducting the study that it was a serious issue deserving of attention. Libertarians and communitarians would hold differing views on equity. Libertarians, on the one hand, believe that inequities will always exist so efforts to address them would be fruitless. Communitarians, conversely, wish to eliminate inequities through collective actions. One is an individualistic approach; the other a cooperative venture.

Equity

According to the literature, the most serious problem with charter schools, and other programs of “choice”, was that they were inequitable. This, according to respondents, appeared to be the case for XYZ as well. I found that XYZ offered a form of streaming because it refused to accept children with special needs. Another inequity was that not all Calgarians had equal access to XYZ either because they had not heard of it or because they could not afford the \$400 student/year busing fee. XYZ class size limits of 25 students per classroom and compulsory parental involvement were other equity issues. Although it claimed that its admissions policy was based on a first-come first-served basis, I outline XYZ’s admissions policy and express concerns raised by many CBE participants about having two sets of rules.

The XYZ adult focus group reinforced the idea held by one of the interviewed administrators that we should not worry about more inequity in society because life is already inequitable. “But frankly, it is ugly that there is inequity in humans” (CSFG). This belief was supported by Herrnstein and Murray (1994), authors of *The Bell Curve*, who alleged that it was romantic to presuppose more equitable results would occur due to educational and social policies because disparities in intelligence and achievement were principally driven by genetics. Some claimed, according to Klatch (1987), that poor people’s problem is not that they lack money, but rather it has to do with biological inheritance and a definite shortage of values regarding discipline, hard work, and morality. Trying to correct inequities “results in what we have in the public system, which is to water it down and water it down and drive to the bottom as hard as we can” (CSFG).

Streaming

Streaming was not part of the initial study. It was after I spent time at XYZ in December 2001 and had time to reflect that I realized that charter schools wittingly, or unwittingly, further advantage the already advantaged by providing homogeneous classrooms with “average” children. When I returned to Calgary to interview CBE representatives in April 2002, I commenced asking them about XYZ and streaming.

In a report released in May 2003 sponsored by The Boston Foundation there was “some reason for concern” about “creaming” or the siphoning off, of middle class, regular-education students from traditional public schools into charter schools. A CBE student focus group participant voiced a similar concern about the test administered to interested students that allowed XYZ to,

...[take] the smarter people out...which kind of effects the balance of public schools because then you are left with low or moderate people in public schools that can't learn from more advanced students....And then when the smarter kids are going to charter schools then a lot more people want to go into there and they'll take away from the public schools... (PSSFG)

A CBE administrator maintained that when you can pick and choose who you want based on academic ability or past performance, athletic ability, artistic ability, etc., "it's streaming" (PSA5). This administrator went on to say that public schools could not pick and choose. If a child lived in the school's designated area "it doesn't matter if he's brilliant academically, whether he's weakest academically, whether he has physical...it doesn't matter. We take them. But they [XYZ] don't" (PSA5). Finally, a member of a CBE adult focus group alleged, "I think they're teaching people to discriminate. I think that's exactly it. They're saying, if you're not good enough, you stay over there and we're going to go over here" (PSFG). Word out of the U.S. is that segregation has reared its ugly head thanks, in part, to charter schools. According to a new report by the Harvard University Civil Rights Project written by Gary Orfield, "public schools in the United States are re-segregating, leaving a vast gap in resources between white and non-white communities" (Staff, 2003, p. 21).

Morton (1994) wrote that the ideal school is a community of learners for all students. Both the academically advanced children and other students should be encouraged to wholly develop their abilities. The gifted students at such a school would certainly be valued for their achievement, and, of course, "also for how their ability could help others" (p. 47)—a form of taxation on their ability. Obviously, the ultimate would also be to have excellent instruction—"perhaps using the very programs developed for the gifted" (p. 47). In talking about schools for

Brazil, Freire (1993) contended, “We want a progressive public-school system...which rejects elitism but does not show anger towards children who eat and dress well” (p. 37).

Special education. Because of its charter, XYZ does not have to accept special needs children. One comment at the charter school focus group was about mixing special education students with regular students:

the rights of a few [disabled] seemed to supercede the rights of the majority [average].

For them [public schools] to allow that to happen and not find better learning environments for those kids, they’re their own worst enemy. They don’t allow [others] to move forward. They inhibit the progress [of others]. (CSFG)

Another member stated that putting special needs students in regular classrooms “is setting them up for failure. Not just that child up for failure, but the rest of the class as well” (CSFG). As was stated elsewhere, some CBE supporters worried about a higher proportion of special needs students in their schools if average students fled CBE schools for charter schools.

Knowledge of XYZ and Other Charter Schools

Competition is not always effective, according to Levin (1989). Its efficiency depends on consumers’ knowledge of alternatives and their ability to assess them. Perfect market efficiency assumes perfect knowledge on the part of both potential producers and consumers. Both XYZ and CBE participants agreed that not much is known about charter schools by many people. One XYZ administrator held that “...the people in the public education system are not well informed on charter schools” (CSA5). Another CBE administrator contended, “I don’t know who knows what about our school. My experience is that most of the general public is ignorant about our school, and about charter schools in general” (CSA1). A CBE administrator supported this view: “I don’t think many of the schools, other than the principals know anything about the school

[XYZ]. But if you were to survey the 6,000 teachers, probably 5,000 wouldn't even know that the school is going in..."(PSA4). CBE parents complained about not being better informed about charter schools. "So I would like to see more documentation about charter schools. Just so you can have a better opinion. Instead of hearing bits and pieces from people good and bad, it's hard to have any kind of an opinion when you don't know what it's about" (PSP8).

So it would seem that people found out about XYZ through word of mouth. "Word of mouth always favours the children of the most wealthy or best educated" (Kozol, 1992c, p. 2). A XYZ administrator thought that "maybe parents that can afford to have their kids play hockey or soccer are ones that are telling each other. I really don't know. Hard for me to say"(CSA1). A CBE student maintained, "I've never really heard about charter schools much before this [focus group] and maybe should know about it so there could be more talk about it so everyone could be more of a discussion about it or knowledge about it or whether it continues or stops or whatever goes on" (PSSFG).

Admissions/Expulsions Policies

"It's regular kids, because we can't turn anybody away"(CSP4). First-come first-served—right? Well, it is, except for siblings, families transferred away from and back to Calgary for business reasons, students coming from a similar private or charter school, and students who do well on a standardized test. If one scored more than one year below one's grade level one was placed back a year. According to one administrator (PSA1), some children were discouraged from enrolling at XYZ. One XYZ student focus group member told of a friend who was bright and who performed well on the "test" but was not admitted. Research supports this as normal for admissions policies for charter schools.

All of the charter schools in the Wells et al. (1999) study of 10 California charter schools had some limitations regarding who attended, either through selective recruitment, strict contracts or behaviour codes, or other means. Bracey (2002) also pointed out that some charter schools essentially are able to choose students through a variety of means. For example, few charter schools provide transportation and few offer any special education programs. XYZ charged parents \$400 per student/per year for busing and refused to admit special needs students. A CBE administrator maintained that XYZ was not an option for all families: "...[T]hat's a whole other issue on affording it. Now we're told that anyone can go to the charter schools, but the reality is, that doesn't happen" (PSA5).

Some charter schools quickly become oversubscribed, as was the case at XYZ, "which means that only parents with the most political savvy, cultural capital, and social resources will be able to get their children in the door..." (Wells et al., 1999, p. 198). According to them, there are devious and stealthy ways that parents and students with the "less valued cultural capital" are discouraged from applying or enrolling. "Instead of excluding students strictly on the basis of race or ethnicity, many charter schools exclude students on the basis of behaviour" (p. 198). XYZ representatives were proud of their discipline and suggested that CBE schools could learn something about discipline from them.

One XYZ teacher expressed a view commonly held by XYZ representatives on expectations of students—"my way or the highway". "[W]e stick to what our charter outlines and our expectations and if you can live by those and you agree with them, you stay and if you don't, then obviously another alternative, seeking another charter school might be good" (CST3). When told that some children left XYZ because they discovered that the system utilized was not

for them, one CBE administrator commented, “Yeah, that’s amazing, because I thought they could do anything with anybody” (PSA4).

Apple (2000a) maintained that markets in education “are also part of an attempt of the middle class to alter the rules of competition in light of the increased insecurities their children face” (p. 78). By altering the method of selection to schools, “middle-class parents can raise the stakes in creating stronger mechanisms of exclusion for blue collar and post-colonial peoples in their struggle for equality of opportunity” (Lauder & Hughes, 1999, p. 2).

Busing

XYZ received a busing grant from the provincial government, charged \$400 per student/year, and would grant a small number of subsidies. Although parents were charged busing fees to attend public schools their children were not asked to leave if fees remained unpaid. One CBE parent was adamant about the unfairness when she argued that “...some people can’t afford \$400 for busing...and they can’t get accepted to that [XYZ] school, so they’re not giving everybody the same choice, so it’s not working...the government has to regulate it I guess” (PSP9).

Class Size

According to the Harvard Education Letter in 2001, those who argue that smaller classes are superior have new proof to strengthen their argument. In several studies presented at a 2001 Harvard Graduate School of Education conference, “researchers cited smaller schools, academies within schools, and smaller classes as key elements in successful dropout prevention efforts” (Staff, 2001, p. 7). A landmark meta-analysis of recent research on the relationship between expenditures and student achievement has found that, among other factors, small classes very strongly influenced student achievement (Greenwald, Hedges, & Lane, 1997).

The positive findings for class size have been consistent, with the most important demonstration of class size effects coming from a large scale study, Tennessee's Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio); and a smaller program in Wisconsin, Project SAGE (Student Achievement Guarantee in Education). Both studies illustrated that students from classes with fewer students (16 and under in Tennessee and 15 and under in Wisconsin) outperformed their counterparts in regular classrooms (Bracey, 2002).

The SAGE researchers reported, according to Bracey (2002), that small classes allowed the teacher to be familiar with the students quicker and better. They lessened the quantity of time teachers expended on discipline and management, and, therefore, added to the amount of time available for instruction. This was reinforced by an article in an insert on private education in the Calgary Herald that stated, "when difficulties do arise, the individual attention available in a smaller class makes it easier to spot" (Dohy, 2003a, p. 4). Increase in class size has diminished teachers' opportunity and desire to tailor curriculum to their students' interests and abilities (Robertson, 1998). Bracey (2002) alleged that SAGE researchers discovered that in small classes, "the students participate more, allowing teachers to see if the students fully understand the subject being discussed" (p. 34). The SAGE program has had much more robust results than marketization and voucher plans (Molnar, Smith, Zahorik, Palmer, Halbach, & Ehrle, 1999). In his analysis of Canadian Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Willms (2002) found higher achievement in classrooms where there were smaller class sizes.

One XYZ student focus group member held, "That's something public schools have to learn. Their classes are bigger than ours" (CSSFG). A CBE student stated that "My friend told me that they were going to have smaller class sizes then they do in public school and that was the main reason [for enrolling]" (PSSFG). At Westmount Charter School (formerly ABC Charter

School) in Calgary, there was a maximum of 20 students per class at the elementary level; at the high school level the maximum was 20-22 per class (Louie, 2003). Descriptions of charters in the U.S. often speak of their small classes. The U.S. Department of Education's survey found, according to Bracey (2002), that the yearning for small classes was a chief contributing factor for creating charter schools. The official for Alberta Learning suggested that CBE could use the smaller class sizes found in charter schools to their advantage,

Charter schools typically have smaller class sizes and there might be an argument made for [smaller classes], if charter schools are successful and they have a maximum class size of 25, people may say, well, there's your proof, isn't it? It's the class size of 25 that makes them successful and that could perhaps cause additional pressure on the public system in terms of the way it staffs its schools. (AL)

One of the appeals of private schools in Calgary was smaller class size, which allowed for more individualized attention (Tratt, 2003). In the same Calgary Herald insert, Dohy (2003a) reported, "'The student-teacher ratio was huge for us', said one parent of a child enrolled in Rundle College [an exclusive private school in Calgary]. 'That was definitely our biggest issue'" (p. 4). The smaller class sizes also offered a greater opportunity to assess what the children were learning, according to a teacher from Delta West Academy (a private school in Calgary). "'Generally we have a 10-to-one ratio in the classroom'" (p. 4). An 11-year-old Grade 6 student at Calgary Montessori stated that smaller classes are better because in bigger classes, its difficult to even just talk to the teacher (Dohy, 2003b). In Spokane, there were "school-within-a-school" special classrooms in public schools, called APPLE (Alternative Parent Participation Learning Experience). APPLE functioned as tax-funded private schools. Heacox

(2002) claimed that a Garfield APPLE class had 15 students, while a “regular” class in the same school had 26.

Low class sizes did not exist for CBE schools. One XYZ student during a focus group session stated, “They’re like 36, like my last class, we had 2 teachers there with 60 kids or 65 kids...” (CSSFG). There were classes of 33 and 34 students in one of the CBE schools that participated in the study. A XYZ parent thought that CBE schools should be happy that charter schools took some of their children. “Well there are some people who think the biggest factor on education is the number of students in classes. I don’t think that but they should be happier now that they have less students in their classes” (CSP5). This view was supported by a CBE student focus group member who was glad that charter schools took some of their students because it resulted in smaller classrooms in CBE schools (PSSFG). A CBE teacher argued that CBE should thank charter schools for setting the precedence of smaller classes.

I guess one thing public schools can, more or less demand, I mean these places are publicly funded with smaller classes of course this is a quest of public schools. I don’t know whether we should be functioning with 36 in a classroom. So I don’t know what we can learn from them, but we can certainly thank them [for setting a precedence]...where we’re sitting, with an enormous number of students in classrooms, their learning’s are not being adequately addressed. (PST3)

Small class size is at the heart of much of the desire for charter schools and private schools. It was the reason many charter schools were opened and it is a reason most often cited for choosing a private school. “According to Statistics Canada, between the 2000 and 2001 school years, the number of full-time private school educators increased by 4.3% while the enrolments grew by 2.6%, reducing the private school educator student ratio” (Kuehn, 2003, p.

17). However, McAdie (2002) maintained, an argument had been made by those keen to lower taxes and costs of public schools that class size did not affect student achievement.

Parental Involvement

A serious problem with charter schools is that the parents that were best placed to affect change in schools were the ones most likely to exercise choice (Willms & Echols, 1992). Spokane's APPLE tax-funded private schools drew resources (volunteers and fundraisers) from regular classrooms. "Tuition is labour—a signed parent-involvement contract for 90 hours of work" (Heacox, 2002, p. 25). Michelle Heacox, a 14 year old student from Spokane, Washington, was against elite programs that required parents to volunteer in the classroom. She argued that parent involvement should be encouraged, but never required for public school admission. "Kids can't pick their parents. We shouldn't be in separate classrooms because we have different kinds of parents"(p. 25)! XYZ required parental involvement as part of its charter. The three CBE schools involved in the study could only request and encourage parental involvement. Overall, Henig (1994), Wells (1993), and Fuller and Elmore (1996) concluded from extensive studies that choice needs to be carefully regulated if it is not to have damaging equity effects.

Private School or Public School

Further complicating the micro debate is the controversy over whether charter schools are more like private than public schools. Are charter schools public services open to all? Or are they more like private services supported by the public purse? Many parents and educators Wells et al. (1999) spoke to during their study of 10 California Charter schools commented that they liked the charter schools because they were like private schools. One CBE administrator declared, "[W]hile charter schools are called public schools...obviously they're charter, they're

not a public school system” (PSA2). Another CBE administrator (PSA4) argued that XYZ was not a public school, although it received public money, because it could pick and choose its students. A CBE student contended that since XYZ did not have to accept all students it “should just be a private school without taking public money” (PSSFG). “Mainly what my friends told me”, maintained a CBE student, “is that it was cheaper than a private school. Yet it has some of the advantages of a private school. That’s pretty much the reason why [my friend attended a charter school]” (PSSFG).

Even a XYZ parent admitted that XYZ was more like a private school than a public school. “The advantage of this school is the kids get the same dollar figure that they would in the public school, the dollars follow the child, so now we have in a sense, a private school education offered with public money” (CSP4). Finally, it appeared to one CBE administrator that “charters are bridging a gap for the moment between public and private education...” (PSA3). According to Bosetti et al.’s 2001 study of Alberta charter schools, “most who chose [XYZ] over private schools based their choice on financial considerations or the belief that the program at [XYZ] is equivalent to those offered by private schools” (p. 55).

Labour Process Theory

Control is the motivating factor behind labour process theory. There is a deliberate separation of conception and execution which deskills labour and decreases the economic worth of the worker. This deskilling leads to control over workers through increased surveillance under the auspices of accountability. The fact that I discovered that teachers from XYZ taught from scripts, were not “full” members of the ATA, and were in a conflicting dual relationship with parents—parents were to be supportive of teachers, and teachers were held directly responsible to parents for the success or failure of their children—prompted me to address this serious local and global issue. Because it is a global issue and globalization impacts the macro

debate—communitarianism vs libertarianism, a discussion of labour process theory is appropriate. Due to the fact that it is also a local issue makes it doubly important to include.

It stated in the XYZ Charter, “Teachers will also be held directly accountable for the success or failure of their students” (p. K-10). How can an organization have, on the one hand, parents and teachers working together, and, on the other hand, have teachers directly responsible to parents? The need for control over teachers partly through deskilling them, through the use of scripts, and denying them union membership, are discussed. The business influence over XYZ is also highlighted.

Braverman (1974) agreed with Marx’s understanding of the labour process which was that aligning labour power with capital accumulation produced a conflict of interests between the labour providers—workers, and the capital accumulators—capitalists. Capitalists considered workers to be unreliable and in need of control in the best interests of capital (Braverman, 1974). Controlling workers was usually accomplished through concurrently deskilling production tasks and escalating managerial power over job execution (Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid, & Shacklock, 2000).

Because teachers are affected by the capitalist system through unemployment, control and accountability, and deskilling and, additionally, since they teach future producers of surplus value, the workers, labour theory is relevant to them. “The capitalist mode of production”, Braverman (1974) maintained, “systematically destroys all-around skills where they exist, and brings into being skills and occupations that correspond to its needs” (p. 82).

There are three aspects of production—the tools of production, the unprocessed materials, and labour power. The state owns the labour power of teachers through purchasing it in the labour market (Smyth et al., 2000). Furthermore, “the state, as employer, organizes these

factors into a particular set of relationships of production. It is this organization that constitutes the labour process of teaching” (p. 24). Conflict in the educational workplace is unavoidable because of the unequal social relations. “It is inevitable that the more powerful will seek to control the less powerful....Labour process theory helps us to understand why, how, and with what teachers are controlled” (p. 13).

Teaching is a labour process that is considerably unlike that of working on an assembly line, in the home, or in an office (Apple, 2000b). Although these differences existed, teachers were increasingly feeling the pressure other workers experienced. “In the general sociological literature, the label affixed to what is happening is the ‘degradation of labour’. This degradation is a ‘gift’ our dominant economic and ideological arrangements have given us” (p. 115).

In a society based upon the acquisition and selling of labour power, breaking up the craft devalues its particular components. Braverman (1974) argued, “The labour power capable of performing the process may be purchased more cheaply as dissociated elements than as a capacity integrated in a single worker” (pp. 80-1). He alleged that when separating conception and execution, an essential outcome is that the labour process is now carried out at different sites by separate bodies of workers. “The physical processes of production are now carried out more or less blindly....The production units operate like a hand, watched, corrected, and controlled by a distant brain” (p. 125). Some would argue that teaching from a script to a standardized test would be an example of a controlled worker.

Control

Thanks to autonomy granted to teachers in charter schools, now that they are not constrained by their union and school board offices, teachers are closely scrutinized in terms of process and outcomes (Apple, 2001). According to him, some U.S. states clearly specified

content and regulated methods of teaching. “Not following these specified ‘appropriate’ methods puts the teacher at risk of administrative sanctions. Such a regime of control is based not on trust, but on a deep suspicion of the motives and competence of teachers” (p. 51).

A control regime, Smyth et al. (2000) claimed, would specify and oversee what was taught, how it was taught, and how outcomes were evaluated. However, they argued that ...this alone will not suffice. There is also need for mechanisms that will ensure that the specifications for each message are actually implemented. This will involve procedures to check the quality of the ‘product’; and to reward and punish those teachers who succeed or fail in the process. (p. 37)

A control regime would organize defining the curriculum, supervising and evaluating teachers, and “engineering compliance and consent from teachers through disciplining and rewarding them” (p. 38). In a British study of approximately 100 teachers, Buswell (1980) discovered that “work controls” alienated teachers and that this led to low morale and a lack of commitment to the organization, which resulted in management attempting to exert more control—a response which simply exacerbated the problem. Bosetti et al. (2001) reported that “They [XYZ teachers] were most dissatisfied with the governing board and their [teachers] participation in school decisions” (p. 60). Smyth et al. (2000) saw control over teachers exercised as a regulated market, through technical means, bureaucratically, corporately, and ideologically as well as through disciplinary power. The effects of this control on teachers, according to them, included deskilling and an intensification of their work.

Deskilling Teachers

“By destroying the craft as a process under the control of the worker, the capitalist reconstitutes it as a process under his [sic] control” (Braverman, 1974, p. 78). Deskilling is the

concept, from a labour process perspective, that is most frequently used to describe the state of teachers' work (Smyth et al., 2000). Many argued that as management made key decisions about curriculum, usually from a different location, "teachers lose the capacity to theorize about their work, and instead focus on the more technical task of implementation of other people's ideas. In this way they become deskilled" (pp. 46-47).

O'Donoghue (2000), in his book review of Smyth et al.'s *Teachers' Work in a Globalized Economy*, wrote:

The exploitation of labour requires that capital control the labour process through forms of surveillance and direction. To achieve this, mental and manual labour are separated so that the mass of workers are deskilled and perform mundane tasks designed and planned by a small elite. (p. 103)

As workers lose power over their own labour, the skills that they have cultivated over the years wither (Apple, 2000b). "They are slowly lost, thereby making it even easier for management to control even more of one's job because the skills of planning and controlling it yourself are no longer available" (p. 116). He reminded readers that one must remember that it took long, hard work by teachers to "gain the skills and power they now have" (p. 116).

Ashenden (1989) suggested that one alternative for lessening the expense of public sector activities, because it obstructs capital accumulation, was to reduce its labour expenditures by devaluing teachers' work through a process of deskilling their work. Another alternative, according to Smyth et al. (2000), was to require workers "to do more with less"—something educators have been hearing for years.

Curriculum

As stated previously, control is the goal of labour process theory, and that “the nature of this control in teaching is evident in the curriculum, both formal and informal” (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 37). According to them, the curriculum embodies the “specification of the labour process of teaching” (p. 37). They considered curriculum to be an industrial issue and important “in advancing a politics of teachers’ work” (p. 159). Furthermore,

since the curriculum is the specification of the labour process of teaching, then it follows that teachers are crucial to its successful implementation. And yet it is clear that many of them cannot necessarily be trusted to implement its spirit faithfully...[thus] teachers must be controlled...and so embedded in [education policy] are systems and strategies of control...that seek to ensure that teachers will faithfully implement the prevailing policy imperatives. (p. 30)

Apple (2000b) maintained that teachers were being pressured into teaching to a test.

“Increasingly, teaching methods, texts, tests, and outcomes are being taken out of the hands of the people who must put them into practice” (p. 116).

Conception—curriculum, and execution—teaching, must be separated, according to Braverman (1974), in order to guarantee executive control and, of course, to devalue the worker, thereby lowering labour costs. Workers, in this case, teachers, are “definitely relieved of all the decisions, judgment, and knowledge” (p. 202). So far, it has been recognized that control drives labour process theory; that teachers have a labour process; and that this labour process is delineated by the curriculum.

Teaching from a Script

Instead of domination directly flowing from management to teacher, it appears in the more impersonal form of a textbook or teaching materials. Smyth et al. (2000) stated, “The ‘teacher-proof’ materials determine what is taught and how, sequence lessons, decide the form and timing of the assessment, and establish the pace of teaching” (p. 40). The Bush administration insisted that instruction be narrowly defined, concentrating wholly on teacher-proof scripted reading programs (Coles, 2003).

According to Meyer (2003), an American school district, by forcing teachers to teach from scripts, had appropriated teachers’ decision-making. The district’s policy was enforced by administrators and district office representatives visiting schools to ensure that teachers followed the scripts,

‘it’s the phonics police...the curriculum cops’, a teacher says. ‘We are not allowed to think for ourselves’The program ignores or dismisses the complexities of teaching in a diverse society....[teachers are] being held hostage by programs that appease powerful special-interest groups and make publishers rich at the expense of authentic learning. (p. 11)

Bracey (2002) alleged that the scripted curriculum also offended numerous teachers from an Edison for-profit school in San Francisco who felt it to be an attack on their professionalism. “‘They literally give you a script with what you’re supposed to say’, said one teacher...the materials were referred to as ‘teacher-proof’” (pp. 118, 119).

The reading program in New York district schools attended by low-income and no-income students, called Success for All, was extremely structured (Goodnough, 2003). Teachers were plainly provided with a script and “down-to-the-minute schedule, breaking drill-like

reading lessons into segments of no longer than 10 minutes. The prepackaged lessons are supposed to ensure that all teachers—even novices or the most inept—can teach reading” (p. 2).

Twenty-five of the 48 interviewees participating in this study were not in favour of teaching from scripts. Most of the 25 thought that teacher-proof materials such as scripts were an attack on teacher professionalism. Twenty-two of the 25 were CBE representatives. Eight of the nine CBE teachers interviewed stated that teaching from a script would not be their preferred approach to instruction. “It stifles individualism, it stifles creativity, and because of that, I think it promotes a kind of sameness and conformity that doesn’t reflect the real world” (PST1). Another teacher held, “Sort of kills professionalism a bit doesn’t it and creativity” (PST2). Yet another teacher stated, “So if you have to follow a script, you’re missing out on that nice interaction with the students. You’re not like a robot up there just reading something that you could just as well tape record and make the kids listen to it. You’re missing that good positive environment of interaction” (PST7). Finally, one teacher argued, “Well, I would assume by handing me a script every morning, or every week, or whatever, you’re saying that I’m not a professional. That I have no ability to be a professional” (PST9).

On the other hand, 11 individuals saw no problem with teachers teaching from scripts. Of these 11, seven were associated with XYZ. One XYZ teacher argued that a script, imposed upon teachers, was in direct opposition to the notion of teachers as professionals. “If it were used in its entirety, I would say yes. If it doesn’t allow for teachers to be an individual and teach to their individual style....[I]t inhibits our individuality and professionalism a little bit” (CST2).

Business Influence

There was evidence of a business influence at XYZ. “Seventy-eight percent [of the Board in 2001] brought business operations expertise [to the Board table]” (Bosetti et al., 2001,

p. 62). One administrator interviewed in this study stated that the board was still partly comprised of business people and that XYZ utilized a corporate-style hiring approach:

We're using behavioral style questions in our yearly process. I don't know if you are familiar with those, that's a technique....When you shake your head you don't know, I find that interesting cause it's been a practice in business for probably 15 or 20 years to use behavioral style interviews and educators seem to not be familiar with it, which is surprising. (CSA6)

Incentive compensation, "a very complex and quite a contentious concept" (CSA5), was experimented with during the 2000-2001 school year but was found wanting. The Board planned to revisit this competitive approach to remuneration:

There is a lot of desire [to implement an incentive compensation plan], especially at the Board Table. We have quite a number of business people on our Board of Directors. A lot of desire built up and is still there to develop some kind of an incentive plan for teachers and all staff. We didn't do it right [the first time]. (CSA5)

The Board favoured a program where "you don't get locked into just a year-by-year grid. You may spend a couple or 3 years in one of those classifications, depending on requirements to move to the next highest level" (CSA5).

Unions

Teachers employed at XYZ were not "full" members of the ATA. During interviews the researcher did not hear overwhelming support for the ATA or unions in general. An attempt is made to illustrate the connection between controlling teachers through dictating curriculum, even going so far as to have teachers reading from scripted lessons, and discouraging unionization. "...[W]e're not promoting that idea [of XYZ teachers forming a union]" (CSA6).

Neo-liberal policies, emphasizing the consumer instead of the producer, need to be regarded as an element of a more widespread assault on government employees (Apple, 2001). “In education in particular, they constitute an offensive against teacher unions that are seen to be much too powerful and much too costly” (p. 40). Smyth et al. (2000) argued that globalization has caused economic restructuring, which fundamentally realigned the relationship between capital and labour. Results of this restructuring are “lower wages, reduced social benefits, and less protective working conditions; and weakening trade unions, which is the single most important factor in restoring the level of profits” (p. 4).

If powerful groups believed in objectives and procedures of education that were different than those of teachers, there would be attempts to preserve the interests of the most powerful. “This involves ensuring that teachers, at the level of their labour process, will conform to educational purposes defined by dominant groups” (p. 14). These dominant groups, according to critics, detest unions because unions can and do stand in the way of this domination and, therefore, must be eliminated in order to maximize control of workers.

According to Lawn (1996), historical British studies demonstrated that “professionalism as an ideology was developed by the state as a form of control of teachers following concerns about continuing industrial unrest, and the growing working-class alliances of teachers” (p. 44). In other words, professional autonomy was endorsed by the state to discourage teacher militarism. In addition to professionalism being used by management to control teachers, it was used by teachers “as a weapon to maintain and/or regain some control over their work, including resistance to externally imposed curriculum prescriptions, and to argue for improved wages and conditions” (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 45).

Autonomous schools, like charter schools, have the authority to set wages and hire and fire teachers which threatens trade union solidarity because each school could have different working conditions. Since teachers could be paid differently, better paid teachers “would have little reason to support their poorer colleagues. At the same time the power of teachers’ unions to press for more educational resources would be weakened” (Lauder & Hughes, 1999, p. 35).

As previously stated, participants were generally not supportive of teacher unions. Once again, the researcher heard of the inability of the system to replace incompetent teachers. One XYZ administrator declared, “Associations have done themselves a disservice by protecting people that they shouldn’t have” (CSA4). Conversely, a CBE teacher was convinced that charter schools were far less accountable because they could release teachers without due cause (PST3). An XYZ administrator explained how two teachers, who were not offered contracts, were handled. “So, both those people left, we kind of went to them and talked with them and counseled with them and they left of their own accord” (CSA5).

According to the AL official, the ATA may be concerned about the welfare of charter school teachers because they are professional colleagues and “the ATA has no influence over their employer” (AL). The AL official continued by agreeing that there was a chance of teacher abuse.

The possibility would exist I would imagine, for an employer to abuse teachers who are working in a charter school because they don’t have to deal with a grievance that might be filed through the local. I mean, that’s a legitimate possibility. I don’t know that its ever happened, but I could see a professional organization being concerned with teacher welfare saying who’s standing up for the rights of those individual teachers. (AL)

According to Smyth et al. (2000), many of the so-called teacher-proof packages were founded on a very individualistic view of student learning and took for granted that individual teachers worked in isolated classrooms with students. “The philosophy of individualism is privileged over any notion of collaboration, so reproducing an ideology of professionalism constructed as autonomous individuals operating independently of one another” (p. 50). This would obviously sit well with Libertarians. Densmore (1987) argued that the principles of professionalism thwarted teachers from acknowledging that their problems were similar to many other teachers and other workers, “consequently they tend to view failures and problems in personal terms and do not seek social or institutional structural change” (p. 155). Finally, Smyth et al. (2000) argued that ideological control could vigorously affect whether or not teachers identified with unionism. “[T]he ideology of professionalism has served in the past to distance teachers from union involvement, and from the broader trade union or working-class political movement” (p. 51).

Concluding Thoughts on the Micro Debate

Braverman (1974) asserted that the mass of humanity was subjected to the labour process for the purposes of those who controlled it rather than for any general purposes of “humanity” as such. Employers were able to increase their profits when they had greater control over the labour process (Wells et al., 1999). Also, in the case of education, this power over the labour process leads to controlling the minds of teachers and students alike through curriculum and instruction.

According to Smyth et al. (2000), teachers are in a contradictory class situation because they share interests of both capital and worker. They prepare “workers for the labour market, and disseminating, and thus reproducing, the capitalist ideology” (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 32). Further, they alleged, because teachers received certain privileges unavailable to the working

class such as a “shrinking” control over their work, and a marginally better economic return, their interests, in this instance, more closely lied with the ruling class. Conversely, they were controlled by management thereby not allowed to determine the goals and purposes of their work, and they sold their labour power. Smyth et al. (2000) proposed that to this degree they share working class interests.

Teachers are being proletarianized with their work being deskilled but told they cannot strike for better pay and working conditions because they are professionals. Teacher resistance to counter their lowly status and often degrading working conditions caused by a century of Taylorism,

is to step into their classrooms, close the doors, and whenever possible do as they please.

This private work, this isolation, has not served democracy well, but it may also keep much that is good in public education alive. For many teachers, it mutes some of the dehumanizing effects of Taylorism enough to keep them teaching—keep them working with children. (Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000, p. 293)

Apple (2000b) contended that one of the outcomes of deskilling and work intensification, is the danger they pose to the notion of “teaching as an ‘integrated whole activity’”. Concerns of care, connectedness, nurturance, and fostering ‘growth’...are devalued” (p. 120). The general reduction in teachers’ autonomy over curriculum and methods of instruction, according to Willms and Echols (1992), may provoke a considerable number of good teachers to abandon teaching, and “make teaching a less attractive profession” (p. 340).

One XYZ parent maintained that education was fundamentally important to society. The ideal situation would be, according to this parent, to have an “awesome” education system where no kids fell through the cracks.

So it's imperative that we wake up and shake up the public school system and show them how you can have a system that doesn't allow kids to fall through the cracks and this is the only way of doing it. Because they are so big, I'm not a very eloquent speaker, pig-headed, that you couldn't get through to them in any other way except by physically showing them what we want in a school. (CSP1)

An XYZ teacher was hopeful that one day charter schools would not be necessary and that "all schools get back to what they're supposed to be doing and that's teaching, it's not being a social work place, it's not, you know, a counseling center" (CST1).

A member of the XYZ adult focus group argued that charter schools would improve education for all children through competition.

There's a huge fear of charter schools for vested interest reasons, and I would concur with my colleague here in that this could be the best thing for them, because if they're truly interested in what is in the best interest of children, the competition will spur them to do more for less, which cannot help but improve their situations. Now they're complaining about all the pressures brought to bare upon them, and all the cut-backs and threats and all that stuff....I think there will be some short-term pain, but I think ultimately more kids will get a better education and I think that's something they ought to be encouraged by. (CSFG)

Speaking of competition, one CBE administrator was not impressed with being forced by the provincial government to lease CBE schools to charter school operators. "We do have disagreements over the use of CBE facilities and we find it difficult to be directed by government to lease to charter schools, to lease to a competitor" (PSA1).

One CBE administrator questioned people's motives for attending XYZ.

I firmly believe that if they said at their schools that all of our kids have to dress in purple togas, and chant all day and do nothing else, but we can promise good marks and no discipline problems, the parents would probably still send their kids there. Cause they are looking for results. I don't think direct instruction means a hill of beans to anybody.

(PSA4)

The most important factor for choosing a school, according to Echols and Willms (1995), “may not be the ‘pull’ of quality, but the avoidance of an undesirable school” (p. 154).

A CBE teacher maintained, “The most unfortunate aspect is that charter schools promote, in some cases, elitism, and at the very least, promote separation, separation of groups of young people” (PST1). A CBE parent stated, “My main point is that charter schools help disrupt our social pattern for children in the neighborhood, because it's one more place our kids are divided up. So I think that's a huge effect on children” (PSP6). Finally, a member of a CBE adult focus group alleged, “Yeah and I think pulling them from all over the city too you lose that sense of community” (PSFG).

A CBE adult focus group member asserted,

I don't want my child to go to school with people that look just like her or think just like her. I want her to be in the real world in her school as well as in her life, because that will prepare her for life and our society is very diverse and we don't segregate our special needs children anymore. They're part of our school, because people with special needs are in our work force. (PSFG)

A CBE adult focus group member maintained that “charter schools may have precipitated a bit of the crisis that we've needed in public education to really take a look at ourselves and

respond in some different ways” (PSFG). So this individual considered the charter school movement to be a positive endeavor, painful but positive.

A CBE administrator was not in support of the concept of charter schools because the existing legislation had made a mess of them.

The government initially created legislation to allow for charter schools in order to provoke innovation in public education—to share best practices, etc. But actually the charter school movement may be interested in a different governance role and process, a more grass-roots representation without unionized staff—less restrictions, etc. The government’s view is that charters would expire and the public schools would pick up new ways of providing education but the parents who have started charter schools wouldn’t want to give them up. They are not going to go away. So charter school parents are frustrated as well. (PSA1)

Are schools in need of improvement? You bet—some more so than others. Is adopting a libertarian plan of competition and individual choice likely to improve education for all children? Experiences in other countries point to a system of competition and individual choice as one that improved educational opportunities for some families. Competition requires winners and losers.

Or should more effort be expended to improve public education by making it more democratic and funding it appropriately? The first approach treats education as a commodity to be purchased. While others view education as a vehicle for achieving a democratic society where all are expected to compromise. I do not oppose competition, as proposed by libertarians, on a “level” playing field. But it has been shown time and time again that unregulated individual choice favours one group over another. Bosetti et al. (2000) claimed, “The majority of parents supporting [Alberta] charter schools are well-educated people of middle to upper-income” (p.

162) and the family total income of parents with children attending XYZ in 2000 “was between \$40,000 and \$60,000 per year” (p. 55). The “invisible hand of the market” was intended to work for some at the expense of the others and should not be left in charge of something as important as education—our future.

Macro Debate—Communitarianism Versus Libertarianism

I undertook this study to look at the micro debate, charter schools, in terms of the macro debate, the communitarianism vs libertarianism. What should take precedence: individual rights or the common good? Should one’s individual rights be permitted to detrimentally affect others? This section will firstly set the debate by providing Apple’s version of the composition of the New Right—the group responsible for lobbying for school choice. Secondly, I will enter the debate with information gleaned from the research and study participants. Lastly, a communitarian solution for troubled public schools—democracy—will be provided.

The New Right

According to Apple (2001), there are four groups involved in the move towards privatizing education, who would obviously side with Libertarians. The first group is neoliberals—extremely dedicated to markets and to freedom as “individual choice”. The second group, neoconservatives, wants to return to discipline and traditional knowledge. The third, authoritarian populists, consists of religious fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals who desire a return of (their) God to all of our public places like schools. And, finally, the mapmakers and specialists responsible for implementation are associated with a specific division of the managerial and professional new middle class that acquires its portability within the state and within the economy based on the utilization of know-how. “These people do not necessarily believe in the ideological positions that underpin the conservative alliance”. (Apple, 2001, p. 57).

The goal of the New Right, Kenway and Bullen (2001) argued, was to create schools as rightful locations for profit-making, and to generate future citizens who are “dedicated and uncritical consumers and docile workers” (p.110). This loose coalition would unarguably side with libertarians

Communitarian-Libertarian Debate

According to Bracey (2002), there are two world views: “the communal, democratic vision and the self-interested, commercial vision” (p. 185). Put another way, there are two approaches available to society. One is a simple route with one objective—deciding one’s destination quickly and cheaply, wasting little time with discussions—favoured by libertarians. However, a second route is available—one that involves an abundance of collective deliberation regarding our destination and route—preferred by communitarians.

Education plays an integral function in the state’s frequently contradictory roles of instituting conditions for the amassing of capital and for democratic practice (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). One of the functions of education, Covalleskie (2002) insisted, “is to balance the individual’s educational goals against both the needs of the community and the individual’s role as citizen” (p. 6). He further stated that,

Public schools in the U.S. have been engines of social mobility and have been governed with at least a semblance of democratic spirit and concern for the common good. It is the concern for the common good that the New Right cannot abide; it undermines the killer instinct, tends to work against selfishness, and limits the effects of social Darwinism. (p. 8)

Apple (2001) further contended that libertarian conservatives continued to exert pressure for their case that true freedom could only be achieved through a “combination of decentralized political power, extremely limited government, and unregulated markets” (p. 15). Neoliberals

had to convince the public that its “unregulated marketplace” was individual freedom at its finest. It would naturally follow that the marketplace would be extended into all realms of our existence because only it, through competition, could get people everything they really wanted. Why should schools be kept out of such a market? “They must be ‘freed’ as well” (p. 15).

Often times, a smaller powerful state, supported by libertarians, is a repressive one that rigorously protects the haves from the have-nots. Therefore, in many U.S. states, enormous sums of money are being spent on building and maintaining prisons. Apple (2001) held that “the United States has found a way to deal with many of the effects of poverty; we jail poor people, especially poor persons of colour” (p. 20). Here in Canada we cap post-secondary education funding for First Nations people but we never hear of a jail shortage. And we know that aboriginal people are disproportionately represented in our prisons.

A CBE parent voiced concern over the dangers involved in a society based on individual rights. “If everybody just did whatever they wanted whenever they wanted, I mean the world would be just amok” (PSP12). Communitarians argued that schools should develop character in students and should be evaluated to see if they were supporting the development of self-discipline and empathy in them (Etzioni, 1996). He also argued, as did Apple (2001), that students should be taught about the historical role of religion but not taught which one to follow. In addition, students should be allowed to express their religious beliefs in private clubs at school as long as they do not attempt to force their views on other students or disrupt their education.

Although Bosetti and Brown (1996) stated, “As for public education, communitarians ask for more parental influence and the establishment of charter or traditional schools” (p. 6), Selznick (1992), a well known communitarian, maintained that communitarians were opposed to market model school choice when he wrote,

Proposals for choice in elementary and secondary education are superficially communitarian, in that they appear to support parents and reject bureaucracies. In fact, however, the market model, in this context as in others, is anti-communitarian. It overlooks the principle that individual choice, to be fully rational, requires a supportive institutional context....Furthermore, the market model is indifferent to education as an instrument of the community, invested with civic responsibilities as well as the education of individual children....The quasi-market created by such a plan must be a regulated market, heavily dependent on governmental protection and support. (pp. 516-517)

Communitarians were also opposed to busing students out of their neighborhoods because it undermined community (Etzioni, 1996). It would appear, then, that communitarians would only favour charter schools that would leave neighborhoods intact. Any school choice plan, according to Selznick (1992), would require a governing agency to ensure minimal standards were established and maintained, control tuition rates, forbid discrimination, curb unreasonable disciplinary actions and expulsions, supply special education services, evaluate schools, and ensure that, in practice, everyone has equal opportunity to enroll in the school of one's choice—hardly what libertarians had in mind for an unregulated market-driven school choice program.

Choice and autonomy are issues in other services such as health. Laura Shanner, from the Dosseter Health Ethics Centre at the University of Alberta, spoke about ethics and healthcare at a health forum in April 2002 in Calgary. She held that there was an “ethics of autonomy” that should underpin all programs of choice. To her, ethics of autonomy meant that individual choice was encouraged but could not be exercised at the expense of others—a common good prevailed. According to Shanner, selfishness and greed were unacceptable.

At an adult CBE focus group session one member stated,

I have a problem with them [charter schools] being here because they're not for the greater good. They draw against the greater good in fact when you look at the long term effects they may have in their potential to degrade the public system, the potential to erode teacher salaries, that comes into some sort of free market system, you know, we're going to pay teachers what we can. (PSFG)

Fifteen of the 18 CBE parents interviewed contended that upholding a common good was more important than individual rights. "And it's great to have choice, however, not at the expense of others. We shouldn't be working towards the small group and sort of making sure they're okay, we should be looking at the large group" (PSP1). Another CBE parent maintained, "I think that's getting away from what we need to have, is community—we're becoming too self[ish], you know, focusing on the individual..." (PSP16).

One XYZ parent considered individual choice far superior to the concept of working toward a common good. "I think the concept 'collective good' is a very woozy term that power lusters have used throughout history to sacrifice some people to the good of others" (CSP5).

One member of the XYZ adult focus group argued that the education of his children was more important than the education of all children. "First and foremost for me would be the education of my own personal child and I don't care what you have to do to get that" (CSFG).

Well, some things never change! Norman Bethune, in his 1936 speech, stated that "The contest of the world today is between those who believe in the old jungle individualism and those who believe in cooperative efforts to secure a better life for all" (Bethune, 2001, p. 17). Taylor (1995) was correct when he wrote that the communitarian-libertarian battle has raged on for years and displayed no signs of abating. Although elements of the communitarian-libertarian debate, mainly addressing the micro debate, were present during the interviews and focus groups,

the full-fledged macro debate did not manifest itself. Once individuals were pointedly asked, as were the CBE participants, about the macro debate, better data was collected. Attempting to draw people into the macro debate without leading them by introducing them to the micro debate on charter schools was unsuccessful.

The Study's Contribution to the Macro Debate

If nothing else this study proved once again that the debate is alive and well. An issue I chose to address was the difference between communitarians and libertarians when it comes to equity. Since libertarians believe in free markets and unregulated choice, equity is not a concern—the “invisible hand of the market” will oversee society. On the other hand, communitarians believe in state intervention to alleviate, as much as possible, inequities inherent to the present socio-political system. I hoped to continue to point out the glaring differences between both groups on equity and to make my case for a more equitable society through a communitarian approach.

Did I further the communitarian-libertarian debate? That school choice, through charter schools, is clearly part of the larger philosophical debate, became obvious to me. As with all qualitative research, it will be up to readers to ultimately decide. If nothing else, entering this debate afforded me the opportunity to better understand both positions—by reviewing the literature and conducting the study. I am unwavering in my belief that a communitarian society is far superior to a libertarian arrangement in terms of equity—fairness and justice. History has shown us that unregulated markets serve a few very well and some not at all. The way the market inequitably distributes food is proof enough that markets, alone, when not held accountable, are not bothered with equity—it is profits they are after. Will we have school banks for the poor in the same building as food banks?

As critical theorists are often times criticized with being overly critical without offering plausible alternatives, what follows is a substitute for unregulated school choice. The common cry from experts and study participants opposed to charter schools was “Give Democracy a Chance”.

Communitarian Solution for Troubled Public Schools

What should be the purpose of schools? Should they be “annexes of industry, spot welded on to the economy”, asked Smyth et al. (2000), or “autonomous, dialogical or interpretive communities committed to enthusing the young with the tools and critical sensibilities necessary to interrogate society” (p. 5)? Libertarians would support the first purpose with communitarians supporting the latter.

Schools should, if we are to take democracy seriously, prepare neither consumers nor producers, but citizens. According to Mursell (1955), almost 50 years ago,

If the schools of a democratic society do not exist for and work for the support and extension of democracy, then they are either socially useless or socially dangerous. At the best they will educate people who will go their way and earn their living indifferent of the obligations of citizenship in particular and of the democratic way of life in general....Such schools are either futile or subversive. They have no legitimate reason for existence. (p. 3)

Covaleskie (2002) claimed that a public school, was “public” in several ways. It was open to the public and run by the public. If it did not, it should reflect the public’s wishes to mold its own future. Finally, a public school was the means by which a public was fashioned. Society shaped its future by producing future citizens. “It [public school] is also the commitment to a shared democratic life” (p. 14).

If public schools are to be sustainable, they need to refocus their goal on preparing people, Glickman (1993) argued,

for productive participation in a democracy....In most of our schools, learning has little relevance to becoming a citizen. Our students are not learning the essentials—how to care about, know about, and act for the betterment of the larger community. Education and democracy are conditional on one another; the mixture gives energy to drive a more enlightened and decent society....[W]e must return to their [public schools] central goal: democratic participation....[T]he public school itself must become a model of thoughtful and moral discourse. (p. 149)

It stated in the *Summary of the Final Report* entitled *SchoolPlus: A Vision for Children and Youth*, “The Task Force advocates that student participation be central to the development and application of school policy” (Tymchak, 2001, p. 19). The report bemoans the fact that most students in Saskatchewan were not involved in policy creation and decision making. The report clearly stated that students’ opinions must be considered. If we want children to participate in a democracy, public schools must teach and model it.

Apple (2001) insisted that “(t)he task is to disentangle the elements of good sense evident in these concerns [about public schools] from the selfish and antipublic agenda that has been pushing parents and community members into the arms of the conservative restoration” (p. 189). Public schools need to pay due attention, listening critically when necessary, to the complaints of parents, and to overhaul its institutions in much more responsive ways. The fact that some criticisms “are unjustified or are politically motivated by undemocratic agendas...must not serve as an excuse for a failure to open the doors of our schools to the intense public debate that makes public education a living and vital part of our democracy” (p. 190).

Oakes et al. (2000) also spoke of the relationship between schools and democracy. “The promise of participation is that the school becomes a public sphere in which free and enlightened people work together to serve public problems, advance the common good, and shape the direction of the democracy” (p. 293). In the words of Panitch and Leys (1999), we need

...to insist on a far fuller and richer democracy than anything now available. It is time to reject the prevailing disparagement of anything collective as ‘unrealistic’ and to insist on the moral and practical rightness, as well as the necessity, of egalitarian social and economic arrangements. (p. vii)

In a true democracy, people are concerned with the needs of fellow citizens in addition to meeting their own needs (Covaleskie, 2002).

Instead of diverting public funds to private schools through vouchers or any other choice programs like charter schools in Alberta and Tuition Tax Credits in Ontario, “lawmakers should invest in more comprehensive school reforms such as reducing class sizes, updating school facilities, expanding before- and after-school programs, and increasing parent involvement” (p. 3), according to a 2001 Infobrief on vouchers published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Weiner (n.d.) wondered how educators could expect to obtain necessary increased public funding for education “when, many school boards, schools, colleges and universities are undermining the argument by recruiting foreign students for profit, and obtaining corporate and other private sources of monies for programs that should be funded from the public purse” (p. 5).

Carter (2002) reacted to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 5-4 decision affirming the constitutionality of Cleveland’s voucher program stating that he believed that the U.S. should, rather than abandon public schools, concentrate its resources on improving them to make sure

that all can become high-performing. “This takes the commitment of all Americans through public funding, community involvement, and support for quality teaching and learning” (p. 1). A similar commitment is required of Canadians if we wish to maintain and strengthen our public schools.

If we were to provide parental choice in education, according to Glickman (1993), it would need to be regulated. He stated that he agreed with part of the choice agenda. He was in favour of school choice within the public school system as long as every student and parent had the same access to all schools, all schools mirrored the diverse student population of the district, all public schools were equally offered financial and other support to create distinctive programs, and if there was a strategy “to enhance cooperation and collaboration rather than competition among all of its schools” (p. 173). Communitarians, the researcher suspects, would agree with this approach to parental choice.

Of course choice programs would be more equitable, Spring (1989) noted, if the economic ability of the poor to choose an education was improved. There are people, he contended,

who believe that without government intervention in education the poor would not receive an ‘adequate’ education. If the problem is poverty, then solve that problem; do not avoid the issue by providing government schools that—at least historically—have been designed to keep the poor in their place. (p. xii)

Apple (2001) suggested that eliminating poverty through greater income parity and establishing much more equal health and housing programs would be a step in the right direction.

If, in fact, some Canadian schools are in trouble, which has not been substantiated, the answer lies in wholesale reform, not in a few people taking their money and running (Themba,

2001). Apple (2001) insisted that sometimes school systems themselves “create the conditions for the growth of rightist anti-school movements in their own communities by being less than democratic in their involvement of the community” (p.199). A XYZ teacher maintained that in XYZ’s charter it was written that parents would be heavily involved. “[Y]ou can’t shut them out. And some [public] schools and some administrations in schools do not welcome parents telling them how to run their show” (CST3).

The ATA official who participated in the study, claimed that one of the fundamental questions is, “why do we have public education and what are the social purposes of public education?” The official insisted that

...there is a linkage between public education and democracy that we must be aware of and need to maintain and much of the discussion about public education has been when it serves to bring all students together. It serves to bind together....In some sense, an egalitarian institution that is based on merit and meeting the needs of the students within that institution and the ideal of the public school is that all students from the community will come there, that they’ll learn to live with each other and they’ll go on with that to build the democratic quality and to create structures that will recognize the contributions that each of them make and allow them to interact on a social level in subsequent years once they leave. The more you fragment education, the more you allow elites to create (havens) for themselves...the more you (fragment) society, the less you can talk about a unified democratic nation. (PSU)

Freire (1993) maintained that we should be engaged in a struggle for schools that are competent, democratic, serious, and happy. Most parents, ATA’s Larry Booi argued, just want a solid neighbourhood school run by competent staff that offers a well-rounded education in a safe

environment (Nikiforuk, 2002). Finally, a CBE administer stated: “We have to go back to our core beliefs and values of why we have public education and people will come” (PSA1).

What follows is a number of recommendations for further research and practice.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Both sides of the debate disagree about the socio-economic make-up of the student body in charter schools. Promoters claim that charter schools are open to all students. Opponents, on the other hand, argue that charter schools are attended mainly by children from middle and upper middle class families. To put this argument to rest, I recommend that a study should be conducted to determine the socio-economic background of students in Alberta charter schools, Calgary Board of Education alternative programs, especially those created in reaction to charter schools, and private schools. Such a study could shed light on the equitable, or inequitable, nature of schools of choice.
2. Different expulsion policies for charter and public schools was a serious concern of public school supporters who claimed that these differences contributed to an already “unleveled” playing field on which public and charter schools are to compete. While I was collecting data at XYZ Charter School I noticed a large filing cabinet drawer full of cumulative files of former students. A staff member remarked that it would be helpful to have a study conducted on why and how students leave charter schools. Study results could supply governments with necessary information to develop a policy regarding student expulsions in non-public schools receiving public money—charter schools and private schools

Recommendation for Practice

3. Both charter and public school representatives agreed that charter schools were relatively unheard of, and, at best, misunderstood, in Alberta. Therefore I highly recommend that the government of Alberta should hold public forums throughout the province where both sides of the debate on charter schools could present their findings and opinions, and where Alberta citizens could ask questions. Possible topics for discussion are a definition of a charter school, student admission and expulsion policies, teacher rights, transportation, parent involvement, and class size. Throughout the study I repeatedly heard and read about the strong connection between public education and democracy. Since a democracy is defined as “a form of government in which political power resides in all the people and is exercised by them directly” it seems to make sense that the best place to learn about democracy is in school. A recent Saskatchewan Learning Task Force reported that the lack of student involvement in school policy formulation and review was distressing and recommended that schools begin to better involve students in their education. Therefore, I furthermore propose that Alberta Learning, Alberta Teachers’ Association, and Calgary Board of Education should develop a plan to better prepare students to live in a democracy. This would require, among other things, adults modeling for students the workings of democracy.

Concluding Remarks

“Conscious originating motives do not guarantee at all how arguments and policies will be employed” (Apple, 2001, p. 205). Good intentions do not assure what numerous and determinate purposes and consequences of policies will be, whose welfare they will serve in the

end, and “what identifiable patterns of differential benefits will emerge, giving existing and unequal relations of economic, cultural, and social capital and given unequal strategies of converting one form of capital to another in our societies” (p. 205). I believe this to be the case with Alberta charter schools. Many proponents simply wanted to wake up CBE and had no idea that school choice, Alberta style, would increase already existing inequities.

Are we not creating a three-tiered education system? Elite private schools for the ruling class, charter schools for the managerial class, and public schools for the rest—service industry workers, military personnel, and the unemployed, homeless, and incarcerated. If one was a true capitalist this would make sense. Why would one waste money, that could be in one’s pocket through tax cuts, providing a decent education for all members of society, especially for those who are only going to be relegated to the lowest rungs in society? Those who had decided to place their children in charter and other private schools were part of an anti-tax movement because they did “not want to pay taxes to support those unlike themselves”(Apple, 2001, p. 186).

The New Right not only questioned why their money should help other people’s children compete against their own children, they also were opposed to their children helping other children who were in competition with them. I assume they view peer tutoring as taxation on brain power. The upper and middle classes have discovered that their children do not always win in school especially when there is an effort being made to assist the less fortunate. Apple (2001) argued that “Charter schools enhance the chances that the children of the professional and managerial new middle class will have less competition from other children” (p. 58). In fact the system, this group further contended, should apportion more education dollars to the group that

least needs it because we have to be “globally competitive”—an “invest in the best at the expense of the rest” scenario.

The ruling class—economic elites—favours charter schools which serve as a buffer between private schools and society. Rather than wrestling with the problem of the growth of private schools and of increased public funding for them, we are busying ourselves contending with charter schools. Presently, some private schools in Alberta receive 60 percent of the instructional portion of provincial funding provided for public education. Ralph Klein, premiere of Alberta, has suggested they move toward a voucher system where people would receive funding for attending a public, charter, or private school. Supporters of private schools were not happy with Klein’s intention of only providing 60 percent of the voucher for them. Incidentally, “The proposed increases from 1997-2001 [without accounting for inflation] would mean a 30.1 percent increase in funding for private schools, while public education would get 6.8 percent increase over the same period” (Harrison & Kachur, 1999, p. 111). Alberta is proceeding exactly as predicted by the literature—get citizens used to choice and deregulation through charter schools before instituting a voucher system which ultimately would lead to the privatization of education. In this way people would, supposedly, only receive the quality of education “they deserved”.

In the Alberta School Amendment Act, 2001 it states that applicants were to apply directly to the minister for approval only if the board refused to establish an alternative program. Charter school applications would be approved if similar programs were not being offered by public education. Charter schools established by boards prior to the amendment would be considered established by the minister. A key change to the Act was replacing “person or

society” as operators with “society or company”. Is this intended to lead the way for private companies to establish charter schools?

Perhaps, in hindsight, enshrining separate schools in the constitution was unwise. It began segregating people by religion. It is now being used by privatization pushers as precedence for their relentless pressure for further segregation. I hope that one day talks will commence between Catholics and others to integrate public and separate school systems for the common good. In Canada, First Nations education is segregated because integration was forced upon them, sometimes inhumanely, and was an abysmal failure. Segregation will be required, as an affirmative action initiative, until First Nations members are proportionately represented in society. According to Freire (1993), “we need to make it clear that we believe in and respect the downtrodden” (p. 30). At that time the researcher would further hope that First Nations leaders would instigate talks about moving toward a totally integrated system that would serve all members of society well.

According to Covalleskie (2002), John Dewey had this to say about democracy: “What the best and wisest parent wants for his child, that must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow or unlovely; acted upon, it destroys democracy”. The market metaphor—children will be classified according to what their families believed and “niche or boutique schools will be created for niche markets. This is not democracy; it is capitalism...while capitalism and markets thrive on competition, democracy requires cooperation” (pp. 3-4). He further claimed that although competition often times leads to product enhancement, “‘often’ is not the same as always or inevitably” (p. 4).

Canadian philosopher John Ralston Saul, in 1995, insisted that public education was the single most important element in the maintenance of a democratic society. “That a private

system may be able to offer to a limited number of students the finest education in the world is irrelevant. Highly sophisticated elites are the easiest and least original thing a society can produce. The most difficult is a well-educated populace” (pp. 115-6). With this in mind we must challenge the agendas of government and corporate interests when their policies and practices threaten to erode the public education system. And we must encourage a reinvestment in public education, perhaps, by insisting that tax dollars only “be used for public schools open to all children and responsible to the public at large” (Miner, 2002, p. 3).

One CBE administrator voiced strong support for public education. “I think it is a reflection of the society—It’s a training place for our kids in society” (PSA3). But “down the road we may pay the price in public education if it continues to be under-funded and we are up against some very difficult competition here” (PSA3). A CBE parent claimed that it is a tough time for public education “but if people would stick with it instead of tearing it apart...” (PSP1) it would improve. Even with the evident shortcomings of many public schools, at the very least they provide “a kind of social glue, a common cultural reference point in our polyglot, increasingly multicultural society” (Shapiro, 1999, p. 177). We would do well to listen carefully to Bracey’s conclusion: Public schools afforded public forums for conferring on the crucial issues of how to ready children for their future roles in society.

“I think we also need to promote our own system better and promote the strength of our public education system in a way that we haven’t” (PSFG). I assumed that this person meant that schools should advertise to attract children. Advertising requires spending education money, already in short supply, to support private enterprise at the expense of education staff, equipment, and supplies. More public sector union jobs with benefits and protection would disappear with private sector non-union positions increasing thanks to advertising by schools.

A member of a CBE adult focus group, who had children in both public and private schools, claimed that the daughter in the public school was better prepared for life in Canada. “For personal reasons, we put one of our daughters into a private Christian school. The other daughter has gone through school in a public education school and I can tell you the one that is best suited for life here in Canada is the one that went to the public system” (PSFG). The importance of diverse experiences for students was clearly stated by a CBE teacher. Diversity should not be ignored; in fact, it should be “appreciated and nurtured” (PST1). This individual insisted that there would be less serious, deeper problems in personal and cultural relationships “if we all respected the fact that we’re in it together and we can respect differences and celebrate them and can celebrate similarities” (PST1).

Harold Raynolds, Jr., former Commissioner of Education, Massachusetts, wrote in the Preface of Paulo Freire’s 1993 book *Pedagogy of the City*:

[Freire’s] observation confirms the central thesis that public education must play a decisive role in the continuing reformation of a democratic society in which all of us can have the freedom and opportunity to create knowledge from our own experience. Poor and inadequate schools serve poor and disadvantaged children badly. Children of affluence can survive inadequate schools because of their advantages....It [assault on public schools] is an orchestrated effort by education conservatives to retain and foster the growth of an elitist system of schooling insulated from and impervious to students from increasingly varied economic, social, and ethnic backgrounds....The result is a widening gulf, reduced resources, and such clever income transfer mechanisms as ‘choice’ and voucher plans to take funding from the public treasury and give dollars [vouchers] to advantaged parents....Failure to respond in an evolutionary way by

providing opportunities for all children rich and poor is shortsighted and dangerous. (pp. 9-11)

According to the official from Alberta Learning, the department did not promote any system—charter schools, private schools, or CBE alternative programs. “What we want to see is a responsive, flexible education system that provides parents in Alberta the opportunity to choose from a variety of different types of education programming for their children” (AL). This view differed from the one expressed at a CBE adult focus group session. The claim was made that public education was the future of society. It was “the fundamental principle upon which democracy is based and our resources and our support should be going to support the public education system” (PSFG). Charles Ungerleider, deputy minister of education in the former B.C. NDP government, at the 2002 School Choice Conference in Calgary, adamantly warned the participants that “If public schools fail, Canada fails”.

Smyth et al. (2000) maintained that in these postmodern times the loyalty to strive for some type of egalitarian or socially just society has been closely examined. To be dedicated to a more socially just world, they continued, has been scorned by some as a “master narrative”—and therefore something to be detested. People who are concerned about democracy and equity are told that they are “living in the past” and have to move forward. However, privateers are attempting to take us further into the past—privatization of many services such as health was tried once and left wanting. Why do they think it will work this time? Are not “gated” communities similar to castles? So who is living in the past? “At this time, when ‘modern barbarity’ is on the rise, it’s not the time to retreat from the struggle to advance a more just way of arranging society. It is not the time to give up on struggling with the question—what sort of schools do we need to fulfill an egalitarian view of the world” (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 154).

Apple (2001) stated that the arguments in his book were generated, among other things, by "...my own anger at the arrogance of those who are such true believers in market logics that they can't see the damage that this arrogance actually created in the real world" (p. ix).

Covaleskie (2002) warned of the danger that the practices of the market and competition would wholly substitute those of democratic governance "by teaching us, as part of its hidden curriculum, to ignore the needs of others in the pursuit of our private goals and to construe society as lacking utterly in common projects and problems" (p. 6). The edgy coalition of neoliberals, neoconservatives, authoritarian populist religious activists, and the professional and managerial new middle class created a "decentred unity, one where each element sacrificed some of its particular agenda to push forward on those areas that bound them together" (Apple, 2001, p. 195). He wondered why people opposed to the corporatization of education, although holding differing views on other issues, could not band together as did the New Right. At the very least, he insisted, "the possible dangers to the public good need to be recognized and publicly debated" (p. 189). Smyth et al. (2000) warned that "we must speak for hope, as long as it doesn't suppress the nature of the danger" (p. xv).

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter both sides of the debate regarding charter schools were proven to be correct. It was shown that CBE was more diverse because of its added alternative programs. Two new charter schools for Calgary slated to open in September 2003 will also create more choice for some parents. So who was and is the Alberta government responding to and who is benefiting from the increased diversity? Previous studies conducted in many countries—U.S., England, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, and Chile—that experimented with school choice have shown, without a shadow of doubt, that those who were already advantaged were likely to benefit most from school choice. Is this the case for Alberta

charter schools even though many Albertans are most likely unaware of the inequitable nature of school choice? I recommended that a study be undertaken to determine the socio-economic status of the families with students enrolled in charter schools, and for that matter, private schools and CBE alternative programs. Many Albertans were sincere about utilizing charter schools to “wake up” what they perceived to be an unresponsive public education system. However, there were those who wished to dismantle public education and turn education over to the marketplace.

XYZ participants held what they considered to be valid complaints. Many of them gave up on trying to influence a large school system that they felt refused to take them seriously. Discipline was poor in public schools and classes were increasing in size. The fact that incompetent teachers, in their estimation, were protected by ATA was extremely bothersome.

I heard repeatedly from CBE participants that they felt that they had to compete with charter schools on an unlevelled playing field because charter schools could pick their students while CBE schools accepted everyone in their catchment areas. The fact that XYZ refused to enroll special needs students angered many CBE participants because they realized that they would be left with a disproportionate number of needy students. Statements in the literature were very clear about charter schools “creaming” the better students from public schools. Another bone of contention for CBE representatives was that not only could charter schools pick their students they could also limit the number of students per classroom. That charter schools received public money when they acted more like private schools, did not sit well with many CBE participants.

Many CBE interviewees were concerned that charter schools received public money but were not held accountable to the public in terms of what staff were hired or fired and what

students were rejected or expelled. I recommend a right to appeal for dissatisfied teachers or students attending charter schools or any other school that received public funding. Some would argue, and I would agree, that public money should only be made available to schools that are genuinely open to all children.

As was previously stated the struggle between libertarians and communitarians continues. It would seem at this time, with extensive tax cuts for the well heeled and the growing gap between the haves and have-nots, those heading the libertarian charge are ahead and must be elated. The Bush Administration plans to plunge the nation from surplus into deficit and “to cast the blame for the ensuing deficit on the very people—the retired, the sick, the poor—who will feel the brunt of its effects” (Frank, 2003. p. 33). He argued that the deficit is intended to enrich the wealthy while callously eliminating services for the less fortunate. Conventional deficit spending, according to the New Right, “redistributes the hard-earned wealth of ‘real’ Americans down into the pockets of liberalism’s contemptible constituents” (p. 40). Republican deficit spending, instead, “redistributes wealth upward, into the bank accounts of ‘their’ people” (p. 40). It is abundantly obvious that the U.S. 2004 budget “is an historic reconfiguration of the machinery of government to serve the rich rather than the poor or even the middle class....The budget is the administration’s way of showing its support for a population of unproductive freeloaders, as long as they’re rich freeloaders” (p. 37).

George Bush, on July 3, 2003, announced a whopping \$15 million in taxpayer-funded tuition grants to D.C. families who wanted to send their children to private schools. Ralph Klein is also espousing vouchers for Alberta and Ontario has instituted a tax credit for families sending their children to private schools. The purpose of education has shifted from a cooperative, egalitarian system to one of choice where the individual takes precedence over the collective.

Many have argued that a market system for education requires losers to go along with the winners—hardly a way to treat a “human right” (Shaker, 2002) such as the right to an education.

What can be done? I constantly read and heard, mostly from CBE participants, that we have to “give democracy a chance”. Unregulated school choice is undemocratic if one group has a greater advantage over another. People confuse democracy with capitalism—the former requiring cooperation and the latter, competition. Most of the research is adamant about the inequitable nature of unregulated choice. As was previously stated one has only to look at food distribution for an example of an inequitable marketplace solution for a crucial service. The best known voucher advocate, John Chubb, of the Brookings Institution, in Washington argued that democratic governance is the main problem with public schools and that voucher plans are necessary for breaking the bonds of democratic education, because it has not worked. Kozol (1992c) argued that we have never tried “democratic education. We haven’t yet given equal, wonderful, innovative, humane schools—at the level of our finest schools—to ‘all’ our children. I do not agree to ‘break the bonds’ of democratic education. I think we should try it first, see how it might work” (p. 4). Communitarians would support Kozol.

“There should not be a need for us. There should not be a need for charter schools. But there is”, alleged one member of the XYZ adult focus group. However, a closer look must be taken at questions of equity. The charter school movement, which was the opening wedge for voucher plans, facilitated fleeing from public education rather than encouraging fighting for public schools that served all children well, regardless of income, race, or gender. Proponents of school choice, instead of insisting that additional money be provided to improve public schools, used public tax dollars for charter schools. It is clear that in the long run, charter schools are a way to help better off people to flee public schools. We need to improve the entire system rather

than provide a better place for select individuals. Proponents of choice are not interested in wholesale reform because of the exorbitant cost.

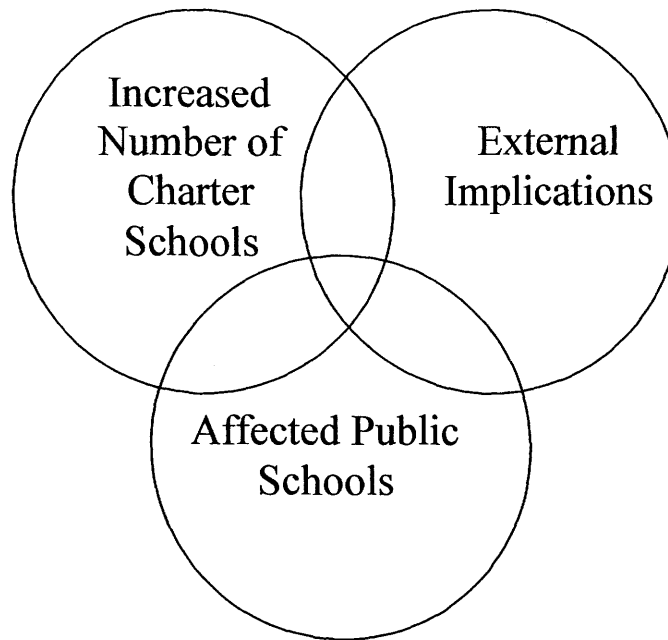
However, there are unanswered questions. Who was and is the government responding to, and who is benefiting from this increase in diversification in Calgary? Is Calgary's program of "school choice", where growing numbers of private schools, charter schools, and CBE "alternative" programs initiated to vie with charter schools, compete for the "best" kids, equitable? Are charter schools the only way to encourage diversity? Another question that has to continue to be asked is are there more negative consequences of charter schools that more than offset the increase in diversity?

Reconceptualized Theoretical Framework

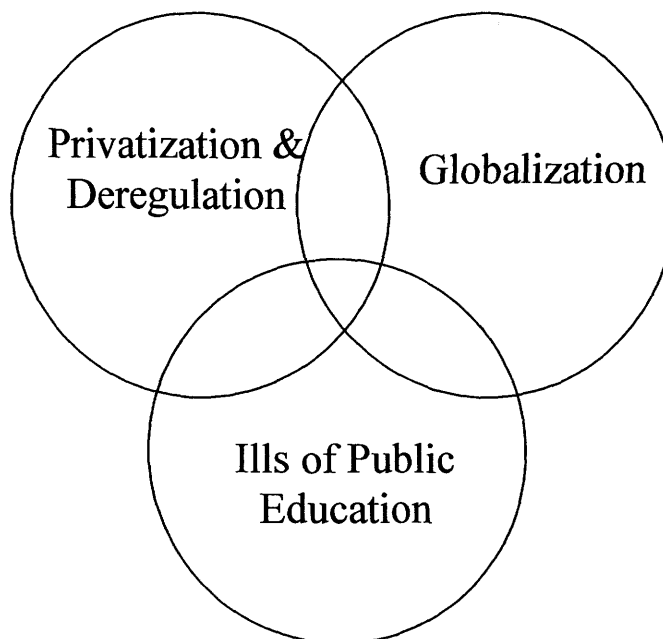
A theoretical framework for the study was explained in Chapter 1 and illustrated in **Figure 1** on page 14. I suggested that there were two debates occurring. The macro debate between communitarians and libertarians was considered to be in the forefront. I thought that the macro debate caused the micro debate to take place—that the debate between individual choice and a democratically determined common good was driving the micro debate. As it turned out most people involved in the study were, for the most part, unaware of the communitarian-libertarian debate. Participants wanted a superior education for their children. Some chose to send their children to a charter school and some stayed to fight to improve the education system for all children. So as shown in **Figure 2** on page 270, the micro debate ended up being in the foreground; the macro debate relegated to the background. However, at the same time the relationship, as depicted in **Figure 3** on page 271, between the macro and micro debates is relational and not causal as first thought. It is also shown in **Figure 2** that the relationship

between globalization, deregulation and privatization, the fear of an inadequate public school system, and the macro debate is relational and not causal as initially perceived in **Figure 1**.

I suggested that because of the internal and external implications of charter schools the number of charter schools could increase (See **Figure 1**). This is now the case with two new charter schools in Calgary. The other supposition was that because of the external implications of charter schools—increased responsiveness and diversity, public schools could improve. I discovered that the inequitable nature of the characteristics of XYZ Charter School, i.e., busing fee, admissions/expulsions policies, class size, parental involvement, etc. could adversely affect public schools. It appears that if charter schools are allowed to refuse admission to children with special needs, a disproportionate number of these students will be housed in public schools. This could lead to a continual departure of better students and involved parents. It is doubtful that public schools will be improved under these conditions. So as depicted in **Figure 2** there was found to be a relationship between the increased number of charter schools, affected public schools, and the external implications of charter schools as espoused by proponents and opponents. Finally, what was found, as shown in **Figure 3**, was that the relationship between the macro and micro debate was that globalization, deregulation and privatization of education, and the perceived ills of public education, which are related to the macro debate, are also related to the characteristics of XYZ Charter School and the performance of public schools. What was discovered was that the inequitable nature of XYZ affected public schools as much as, if not more than, the espoused external implications. The promise to improve public education was not manifest. However, public schools have been affected.



Micro Debate—Charter Schools



Macro Debate—Communitarianism vs Libertarianism

Figure 2. Reconceptualized Theoretical Framework

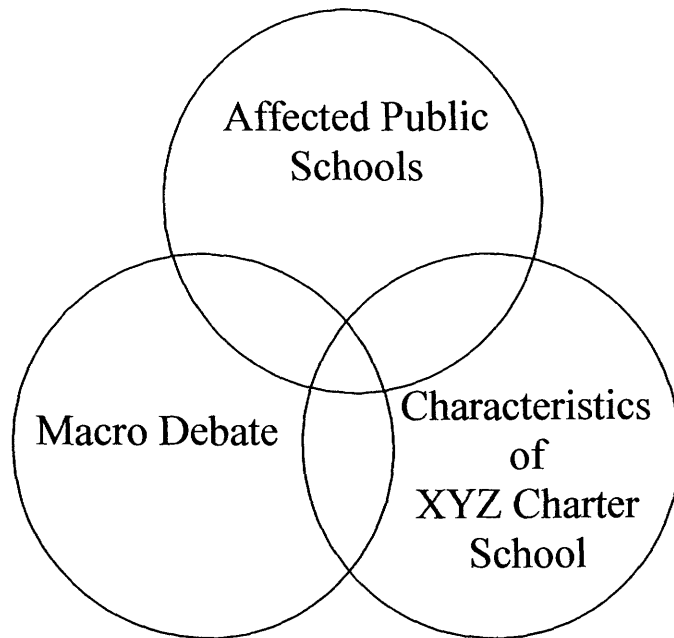


Figure 3. Relationship between the Macro and Micro Debate

References

- Ad hoc forum planning committee (2001, March). *Forum participation guide: The role of the state in the redistribution of wealth—a means of combating poverty*. Quebec City, QC: Hemispheric Social Alliance.
- Anderson, G. (1990). *Fundamentals of educational research*. London, England: The Falmer Press.
- Apple, M. (1982). *Education and power*. Boston: Ark Paperbacks.
- Apple, M. (2000b). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Apple, M. (2000a). Are vouchers really democratic? *Education Monitor*, 4(2), 24-25.
- Apple, M. (2001). *Educating the 'right' way: Markets, standards, god, and inequality*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Apple, M., & Beane, J. (Eds.). (1995). *Democratic schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Apple, M., & Bracey, G. (2001). *School vouchers*. Milwaukee, WI: Centre for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation—University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- ASCD (2001). Helping students or harming schools. *Infobrief* [On-line serial], 24. Available: www.ascd.org/readingroom/infobrief/issue24.html
- Ashenden, D. (1989, November). *The future of the teaching profession*. Text of a public lecture given in Melbourne, Australia under the auspices of the State Board of Education of Victoria.
- Avis, W. (1989). *Funk & Wagnalls Canadian college dictionary*. Toronto, ON: Fitzhenry &

Whiteside.

Barlow, M., & Robertson, H-J. (1994). *Class warfare: The assault on Canada's schools*.

Toronto, ON: Key Porter Books.

Bauman, P. (1996). *Governing education: Public sector reform or privatization*. Needham

Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Beesley, M. (Ed.). (1997). *Privatization, regulation, deregulation* (2nd ed.). New York:

Routledge.

Beesley, M., & Littlechild, S. (1997). Privatization: Reflections on UK experience. In M.

Beesley (Ed.), *Privatization, regulation, deregulation* (2nd ed.) (pp. 43-57). New York:

Routledge.

Bellah, R. (1998). Community properly understood: A defense of 'democratic

communitarianism'. In A. Etzioni (Ed.), *The essential communitarian reader*. Lanham,

MD: Rowman & Littlewood.

Benton-Evans, R. (1997). Educating the contemporary citizen: Individual choice or community

responsibility. *Canadian Social Studies, Spring*, 146-151.

Bethune, N. (2001). Words of wisdom from the past: Let's take private profit and greed out of

healthcare. *The CCPA Monitor*, 8(1), 17.

Birkett, F. (2000). *Charter schools: The parent's complete guide*. Roseville, CA: Prima

Publishing.

Boaz, D. (Ed.). (1997). *The libertarian reader*. New York: The Free Press.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to*

theory and methods. Toronto, ON: Allyn and Bacon.

Bosetti, L., & Brown, D. (1996, October). *Privatization and the future of public schools*. Paper

presented at the Conference on Values and Educational Leadership, University of Toronto, ON.

- Bosetti, L., Foulkes, E., O'Reilly, R., & Sande, D. (2000). *Canadian charter schools at the crossroads*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.
- Bracey, G. (2002). *The war against America's public schools: Privatizing schools, commercializing education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Braverman, H. (1974). *Labour and monopoly capital: The degradation of work in the twentieth century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Buswell, C. (1980). Pedagogic change and social change. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 1(3), 293-306.
- Butler, S. (1991). Privatization for public purposes. In W. Gormley, Jr. (Ed.), *Privatization and its alternatives* (pp. 17-24). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Butts, R. (1979). Education vouchers: The private pursuit of the public purse. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 6(1), 7-9.
- Calvert, J., & Kuehn, L. (1993). *Pandora's box: Corporate power, free trade, and Canadian education*. Montreal, QC: La maitresse d'école.
- Camp, D. (2001). The plague of privatization: Having public services run by private firms a colossal flop. *The CCPA Monitor*, 7(9), 29.
- Carnoy, M. (1998). National voucher plans in Chile and Sweden: Did privatization reforms make for better education? *Comparative Education Review*, 42(3), 309-337.
- Carnoy, M., & Levin, H. (1985). *Schooling and work in the democratic state*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Carter, G. (2002, June). *ACD statement on the Supreme court decision on vouchers*. [On-line].

Available: www.ascd.org/educationviews/sc_voucher_decision_statement.html

Casey, L. (2000). The charter conondrum. *Rethinking Schools*, 14(3), 18-19.

Catterall, J. (1984). *Education vouchers*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Cheung, S., Murphy, M., & Nathan, J. (1998). *Making a difference? Charter schools, evaluation, and student performance*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute Centre for School Change.

Chubb, J., & Moe, T. (1995). America's public schools: Choice is a panacea. In J. Noll (Ed.), *Taking sides: Clashing views on controversial issues (8th ed.)* (pp. 148-159). Guilford, CT: The Dushkin Publishing Group.

Chubb, J., & Moe, T. (1990). *Politics, markets and America's schools*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press.

Clarke, T. (n.d.). *By what authority: Unmasking and challenging the global corporations' assault on democracy through the World Trade Organization*. Ottawa, ON: The Polaris Institute.

Coleman, J., Hoffer, T., & Kilgore, S. (1982). *High school achievement: Public, catholic, and private schools compared*. New York: Basic Books.

Coles, G. (2003). Learning to read and the 'w principle'. *Rethinking Schools*, 17(4), 7-8.

Connell, R., Ashenden, D., Kessler, S., & Dowsett, G. (1982). *Making the difference: Schools, families, and social division*. Sydney, Australia: George Allen and Unwin.

Cookson, P., Jr., & Persell, C. (1985). *Preparing for power: America's elite boarding schools*. New York: Basic Books.

- Coons, J. (1978). Can education be equal and excellent? *Journal of Education Finance*, 4(2), 147-157.
- Covaleskie, J. (2002, May). *Education and the common good: Rejecting vouchers*. Paper presented at the School Choice: Public Education at a Crossroads Conference, Calgary, AB.
- Crain, R., & Wells, A. (1994). Perpetuation theory and the long-term effects of school desegregation. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(4), 531-555.
- Crawford, J. (2001). Teacher autonomy and accountability in charter schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(2), 186-200.
- Davis, B. (1990). *What our high schools could be: A teacher's reflections from the 60's to the 90's*. Toronto, ON: Our Schools/Our Selves & Garamond Press.
- Densmore, K. (1987). Professionalism, proletarianization, and teachers' work. In T.S. Popkewitz (Ed.), *Critical studies in teacher education: Its folklore, theory, and practice* (pp. 130-160). London, England: Falmer Press.
- Denzin, N. (1989). *The research act* (3rd ed.). Edgewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Dobbin, M. (1997). *Charter schools: Charting a course to social division*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Dobbin, M. (2001). Privatization fuels the energy crisis: When it comes to energy, ideology wins over common sense. *The CCPA Monitor*, 7(9), 31.
- Dohy, L. (2003b, February 18). Finding the right educational fit. *The Calgary Herald*, p. C3.
- Dohy, L. (2003a, February 18). Small class size an appeal of private schools. *The Calgary Herald*, p. C4.

- Donmoyer, R. (1990). Generalizability and the single-case study. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp.175-200). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Duffy, C. (2000). *Problems with the California voucher initiative, proposition 38*. Available at <http://www.grovepublishing.com>
- Echols, F., & Willms, J. (1995). Reasons for school choice in Scotland. *J. Education Policy*, 10(2), 143-156.
- Emberley, P., & Newell, W. (1994). *Bankrupt education: The decline of liberal education in Canada*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Etzioni, A. (1993). *The spirit of community: Rights, responsibilities, and the Communitarian agenda*. New York: Crown.
- Etzioni, A. (1996). *The new golden rule: Community and morality in a democratic society*. New York: Basic Books.
- Etzioni, A. (1998). *The essential communitarian reader*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlewood.
- Finn, E. (2001). Another example of business leaders' insensitivity: Affluent CEOs sneer at social programs they can do without. *The CCPA Monitor*, 7(9), 4.
- Fiske, E., & Ladd, H. (2000). *When schools compete: A cautionary tale*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Fowler, C. (1980). Must voucher plans kill public schools? *The American School Board Journal*, 67(1), 34-35.
- Frank, T. (2003). Get rich or get out: Attempted robbery with a loaded federal budget. *Harper's Magazine*, 306(1837), 33-42.

- Freedman, J. (1995). Busting bureaucracy: The charter idea comes to Canada. In S. Lawton (Ed.), *Busting bureaucracy to reclaim our schools* (pp. 131-146). Montreal, QC: The Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Freire, 1993). *Pedagogy of the city*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Friedman, M. (1970, September 13). The social responsibility of business is to increase profits. *The New York Times*.
- Friedman, M. (1997). The relation between economic freedom and political freedom. In D. Boaz (Ed.), *The libertarian reader* (pp. 292-302). New York: The Free Press.
- Fuller, B. (1996). Is school choice working? *Education Leadership*, 54(2), 37-40.
- Fuller, B., & Elmore, R. (Eds.). (1996). *Who chooses? Who Loses? Culture, institutions, and the unequal effects of school choice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fusarelli, L. (2001). The political construction of accountability: When rhetoric meets reality. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(2), 157-169.
- Gall, M., Borg, W., & Gall, J. (1996). *Educational research: An introduction* (6th ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Garms, W., Guthrie, J., & Pierce, L. (1988). *School finance: The economics and politics of public education*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Garn, G., & Cobb, C. (2001). A framework for understanding charter school accountability. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(2), 113-128.
- George, S. (1997). *Winning the war of ideas: Lessons from the Gramscian right*. Available: <http://www.tni.org/george/articles/dissent.htm>
- Gerwitz, S., & Ball, S. (1995). Schooling in the marketplace: A semiological analysis. Paper presented at the AERA annual meeting: *Trading Places: Education markets and*

the school response, San Francisco.

- Giroux, H. (1998, Fall). The business of public education: Corporate assault on schools recycles right-wing ideology. *CCPA Education Monitor*, 2(4), 10-11.
- Glickman, C. (1993). *Renewing America's schools: A guide for school-based action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Goodnough, A. (2003, January 19). *Fearing a class system in the classroom*. [On-line]. Available: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/19/education/19SCHO.html>
- Gormley, W., Jr. (1991). Two cheers for privatization. In W. Gormley, Jr. (Ed.), *Privatization and its alternatives* (pp. 307-318). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Greenwald, R., Hedges, L., & Lane, R. (1997). The effect of school resources in student achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 66(3), 361-396.
- Greider, W. (1997). *One world, ready or not: The manic logic of global capitalism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Guba, E. (1990). Subjectivity and objectivity. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp.74-91). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Guppy, N., & Davies, S. (1999). Understanding Canadians' declining confidence in public education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24(3), 265-280.
- Guthrie, J. (1983). Funding an adequate education. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 64(7), 471-476.
- Harrison, T. & Kachur, J. (1999). *Contested classrooms: Education, globalization, and democracy in Alberta*. Edmonton, AB : The University of Alberta Press.
- Heacox, M. (2002). Discriminating against 'regular' kids. *Rethinking Schools*, 17(2), 25.

- Head, J. (1994). Public education: A necessity not a choice. In B. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Educational choice: Necessary but not sufficient* (pp. 107-118). Montreal, QC: The Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Henig, J. (1994). *Rethinking school choice: Limits of a market metaphor*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Herman, E. (2000). New world order words that purr and snarl: Neoliberals misuse key words in their propaganda barrage. *The CCPA Monitor*, 7(3), 12-14.
- Herrnstein, R., & Murray, C. (1994). *The bell curve*. New York: Free Press.
- Hess, F. (2001). Whaddya mean you want to close my school? The politics of regulatory accountability in charter schooling. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(2), 141-156.
- Hill, P. (2000). *What is public about public education?* Washington, DC: University of Washington and The Brookings Institution Brown Center on Educational Policy.
- Hodge, G. (2000). *Privatization: An international review of performance*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Horn, J., & Miron, G. (1999). *Evaluation of the Michigan public school academy initiative*. Kalamazoo, MI: The Evaluation Centre, School of Education, Western Michigan University.
- Ingstrup, O., & Crookall, P. (1998). *The three pillars of public management: Secrets of sustained success*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queens University Press.
- James, T., & Levin, H. (Eds.). (1983). *Public dollars for private schools: The case of tuition tax credits*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Kachur, G. (1999). Privatizing public choice: The rise of charter schooling in Alberta. In T.

- Harrison & G. Kachur (Eds.), *Contested classrooms: Education, globalization, and democracy in Alberta* (pp. 107-122). Edmonton, AB: The University of Alberta Press.
- Kenway, J., & Bullen, E. (2001). *Consuming children: Education-entertainment-advertising*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Kirby, S., & McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience research social change: Methods from the margins*. Toronto, ON: Garamond Press.
- Klatch, R. (1987). *Women of the new right*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Kohl, H. (1992). When choice equals no choice. In R. Lowe & B. Miner (Eds.), *False choices: Why school vouchers threaten our children's future* (p. 25). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Korten, D. (1995). *When corporations rule the world*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Kozol, J. (1992c). "I dislike the idea of choice, and I want to tell you why...". Educational Leadership [On-line serial] 50(3). Available: www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9211/kozol.html
- Kozol, J. (1992b). Chicago: Public school 'choice' and inequality. In R. Lowe & B. Miner (Eds.), *False choices: Why school vouchers threaten our children's future* (p. 24). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Kozol, J. (1992a). Whittle's raid on public education. In R. Lowe & B. Miner (Eds.), *False choices: Why school vouchers threaten our children's future* (pp. 17-19). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Krashinsky, M. (1994). Why educational vouchers won't help Johnny read. In B. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Educational choice: Necessary but not sufficient* (pp. 119-129). Montreal, QC: The Institute for Research on Public Policy.

- Kuehn, L. (1995). *Ten problems with charter schools*. Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Teachers Federation.
- Kuehn, L. (2003). Does class size matter? *Our Schools Our Selves*, 12(2), 17.
- Kymlicka, W. (1990). *Contemporary political philosophy*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Lancy, D. (1993). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to the major traditions*. New York: Longman.
- Lareau, A. (1989). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. London, England: Falmer Press.
- Lauder, H., & Hughes, D. (1999). *Trading in futures: Why markets in education don't work*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Lawn, M. (1996). *Modern times? Work, professionalism, and citizenship in teaching*. London, England: Falmer Press.
- Lawton, S. (1995). *Busting bureaucracy to reclaim our schools*. Montreal, QC: The Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Levin, H. (1989). *The theory of choice applied to education* (Project Report No. 89-CERAS-10). Stanford, CA.: Centre for Educational Research at Stanford.
- Livingstone, D. (1999). *The education-jobs gap*. Toronto, ON: Garamond.
- Louie, J. (2003, February 18). New charter school focuses on individual. *The Calgary Herald*, p. C2.
- Lowe, R. (1992b). Choosing inequality in the schools. *Monthly Review*, 44(1), 21-34.
- Lowe, R. (1992a). The hollow promise of vouchers. In R. Lowe & B. Miner (Eds.), *False*

choices: Why school vouchers threaten our children's future (pp. 3-5, 26-31).

Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

Marcuse, P. (2000). The language of globalization. *Monthly Review*, 52(3), 23-27.

Mayan, M. (2001). *An introduction to qualitative methods: A training module for students and professionals*. Edmonton, AB: The International Institute for Qualitative Methodology.

McAdie, P. (2002). The war on public education [Review of the book *The war against America's public schools: Privatizing schools, commercializing education*]. *Ourschools Ourselves*, 11(4), 147-153.

McMurtry, J. (1991). Education and the market model. *Praideusis*, 5(1), 36-44.

McMurtry, J. (1998). *Unequal freedoms: The global market as an ethical system*. Toronto, ON: Garamound Press.

McQuaig, L. (1998). *The cult of impotence: Selling the myth of powerlessness in the global economy*. Toronto, ON: Penguin Books.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, R. (2003). Captives of the script: Killing us softly with phonics. *Rethinking Schools*, 17(4), 9-11.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data Analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Miner, B. (1992). Voucher plans proliferate. In R. Lowe & B. Miner (Eds.), *False choices: Why school vouchers threaten our children's future* (pp. 6-7). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

Miner, B. (2000). Wisconsin reports on voucher program. *Rethinking Schools*, 14(3), 13.

- Miner, B. (2002). Supreme Court debates vouchers. *Rethinking Schools*, 16(3), 3,25.
- Mitchell, C., Sackney, L., & Walker, K. (1996). The postmodern phenomenon: Implications for school organizations and educational leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration and Foundations*, 11(1), 38-67.
- Moe, T. (2001). *Schools, vouchers, and the American public*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Molnar, A., Smith, P., Zahorik, A., Halbach, A., & Ehrle, K. (1999, summer). Evaluating the SAGE program. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 21, 165-177.
- Morton, T. (1994). The best and wisest for all: A look at gifted programs. *Ourschools Ourselves*, 5(3), 36-49.
- Muller, C. (1983). The social and political consequences of increased public support for private schools. In T. James and H. Levin (Eds.), *Public dollars for private schools: The case of tuition tax credits*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Mursell, J. (1955). *Principles of democratic education*. New York: Norton.
- Nathan, J. (1999). *Charter schools: Creating hope and opportunity for American education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nikiforuk, A. (1993). *School's out: The catastrophe in public education and what we can do about it*. Toronto, ON: Macfarlane Walter & Ross.
- Nikiforuk, A. (2002, March). Campus radical. *National Post*, pp. Business 67-71.
- Oakes, J., Hunter Quartz, K., Ryan, S., & Lipton, M. (2000). *Becoming good American schools: The struggle for civic virtue in education reform*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- O'Donoghue, M. (2000). [Review of the book *Teachers' work in a globalized economy*].

Journal of Educational Enquiry, 1(1), 103-106.

Olson, T. (2002, December 30). Alberta to study education vouchers. *The Calgary Herald*, p.

A1.

Opfer, V. (2001). Charter schools and the panoptic effect of accountability. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(2), 201-215.

Orfield, G. (1992). Playing politics with 'choice'. In R. Lowe & B. Miner (Eds.), *False choices: Why school vouchers threaten our children's future* (p. 12). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.

Osborne, D., & Plastrik, P. (1997). *Banishing bureaucracy: The five strategies for reinventing government*. Don Mills, ON: Addison-Wesley Publishing.

Osborne, K. (1999). *Education: A guide to the Canadian school debate—or, who wants what and why?* Toronto, ON: Penguin Books.

Pack, J. (1991). The opportunities and constraints of privatization. In W. Gormley, Jr. (Ed.), *Privatization and its alternatives* (pp. 281-306). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Panitch, L., & Leys, C. (Eds.). (1999). *Necessary and unnecessary utopias*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Peshkin, A. (2000). The nature of interpretation in qualitative research. *American Educational Research Association*, 29(9), 5-9.

Peters, T., & Waterman, R. (1982). *In search of excellence: Lessons from American's best corporations*. New York: Harper and Row.

Plawiuk, E. (1997). The shifting wins of school 'reform': Privatizing public education in

Alberta. *Briarpatch*, September, 27.

Repo, S. (Ed.). (1998). *Making schools matter: Good teachers at work*. Toronto, ON: James Lorimer.

Richardson, J. (Ed.). (1990). *Privatization and deregulation in Canada and Britain*. Aldershot, England: Dartmouth.

Robertson, H-J. (1995). Busting bureaucracy: A response. In S. Lawton, *Busting bureaucracy to reclaim our schools* (pp. 115-130). Montreal, QC: The Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Robertson, H-J. (1998). *No more teachers, no more books: The commercialization of Canada's schools*. Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart.

Rofes, E. (1999). The catalyst role of charter schools. *The School Administrator*, 56(7), 14-18.

Roman, A. (1990). Regulation, deregulation, competition and privatization: The Canadian experience. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Privatization and deregulation in Canada and Britain* (pp. 229-244). Aldershot, England: Dartmouth.

Rothstein, R. (1998). Charter conundrum. *American Prospect*, July-Aug., 46-60.

Rothstein, R., Carnoy, M., & Benveniste, L. (1999). *Can public schools learn from private schools?* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Sackney, L., & Dibsky, D. (1994). School-based management: A critical perspective. *Educational Management and Administration*, 22(2), 104-112.

Sarason, S. (1998). *Charter schools: Another flawed educational reform?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Saul, J. (1995). *The doubter's companion: A dictionary of aggressive common sense*. Toronto,

ON: Penguin Books.

Sawa, R. (1995). *Teacher evaluation policies and practices* (SSTA Research Centre Report #95-04). Regina, SK: Saskatchewan School Trustees Association.

Selznick, P. (1992). *The moral commonwealth: Social theory and the promise of community*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Shaker, E. (2002). Ontario's tax-support of private schools helps few, harms many. *The CCPA Monitor*, 8(7), 26-27.

Shapiro, A. (1999, June 21). The net that binds. *The Nation*, pp. 11-15.

Shor, I. (1986). *Culture wars: School and society in the conservative restoration 1964-1984*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Shrybman, S. (1999). *A citizen's guide to the World Trade Organization*. Toronto: James Lorimer.

Sinclair, S. (2000). *GATS: How the World Trade Organization's new "services" negotiations threaten democracy*. Ottawa: The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Smith, D. (1999). Economic fundamentalism, globalization, and the public remains of education. *Interchange*, 30(1), 93-117.

Smith, J. (1990). Canada's privatization program. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Privatization and deregulation in Canada and Britain* (pp. 38-51). Aldershot, England: Dartmouth.

Smyth, J., Dow, A., Hattam, R., Reid, A., & Shacklock, G. (2000). *Teachers' work in a globalizing economy*. London: Falmer Press.

Snyder, S. (2001, June 2). Report: More can be done to ease charter school costs. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, p. A1.

- Sommers, C., & Sommers, F. (1997). *Vice and virtues in everyday life: Introductory readings in ethics*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Spring, J. (1989). *The sorting machine revisited: National educational policy since 1945*. New York: Longman.
- Staff (1999c). *A citizen's guide to the World Trade Organization*. Washington, D.C.: Inkworks.
- Staff (1999b). Edison loses millions—again *Rethinking Schools*. 14(1), 21.
- Staff (1999a). *Lessons from other countries about private school aid*. Washington, DC: Centre on Education Policy.
- Staff (2000). Massachusetts charters get bad news. *Rethinking Schools*, 14(3), 12.
- Staff (2001). Do smaller structures help lower the drop-out risk? *Harvard Education Letter*, 17(2), 7.
- Staff (2003). Segregation worst in 30 years. *Rethinking Schools*, 17(3), 21.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stake, R. (2000). Case studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Starr, P. (1991). The case for skepticism. In W. Gormley, Jr. (Ed.), *Privatization and its alternatives* (pp. 25-36). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Stewart, W. (1998). *Dismantling the state: Downsizing to disaster*. Toronto, ON: Shrug Ltd.
- Talbert-Johnson, C. (2000). The political context of school desegregation: Equity, school improvement, and accountability. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(1), 8-16.
- Taylor, A. (2001). *The politics of educational reform in Alberta*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

- Taylor, C. (1995). *Philosophical arguments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Themba, M. (2001). 'Choice' and other white lies. *Rethinking Schools*, 16(1), 6-7.
- Tratt, K-M. (2003, February 18). Growing independence. *The Calgary Herald*, pp. C1-C2.
- Tyack, D. (1974). *The one best system: A history of American urban education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Tymchak, M. (2001). *SchoolPlus: A vision for children and youth: Summary of the final report*.
Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit.
- Van Horn, C. (1991). The myths and realities of privatization. In W. Gormley, Jr. (Ed.),
Privatization and its alternatives (pp. 261-280). Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Vergari, S. (2001). Charter school authorizers: Public agents holding charter schools accountable. *Education and Urban Society*, 33(2), 129-140.
- Wallach, L. & Sforza, M. (1999). *Whose trade organization? Corporate globalization and the erosion of democracy*. Washington, DC: Public Citizen Foundation.
- Weiner, H. (n.d.). *Trade, privatization, and public education*. Unpublished document.
- Wells, A. (1993). *Time to choose: America at the crossroads of school choice policy*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Wells, A., Lopez, A., Scott, J., & Holme, J. (1999). Charter schools as postmodern paradox: Rethinking social stratification in an age of deregulated school choice. *Harvard Educational Review*, 69(2), 172-204.
- Whitty, G., Power, S., & Halpin, D. (1998). *Devolution and choice in education: The school, the state, and the market*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Wilkinson, B. (1994). *Educational choice: Necessary but not sufficient*. Montreal: The Institute

for Research on Public Policy.

Willms, J. (Ed.). (2002). *Vulnerable children: Findings from Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Willms, J., & Echols, F. (1992). Alert and inert clients: The Scottish experience of parental choice of schools. *Economics of Education Review*, 11(4), 339-350.

Wise, W., & Darling-Hammond, L. (1984). Education by voucher: Private choice and the public good. *Educational Theory*, 34(1), 29-47.

Witte, J. (2000). *The market approach to education: An analysis of America's first voucher program*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wolcott, H. (1990). On seeking – and rejecting – validity in qualitative research. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate* (pp.121-152). New York: Teachers College Press.

Wolcott, H. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Woodhouse, H. (1991). Discussion: Contradicting the market. *Praideusis*, 5(1), 50-52.

Yarrow, G. (1986). Privatization in theory and practice. *Economic Theory*, 2, 324-377.

Young, D. (1981). *Education vouchers: Boon or bane?* Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education Planning and Research.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Charter School Participants

Personal Interview

Introductory Questions

Parents.

1. Why did you choose to send your child(ren) to this charter school? Was the original reason the same or different than the current reason for staying? Please elaborate.
 - a. What do you think of the various arguments and issues concerning the impact of Charter Schools on Public Schools?
 - b. Do you have any positions, interests, or stances that you would like to tell me about?
 - c. Are there any viewpoints that you find particularly attractive or repelling?

Teachers/administrators.

1. Why did you choose to work at this charter school? Was the original reason the same or different than the current reason for staying? Please elaborate.
 - a. What do you think of the various arguments and issues concerning the impact of Charter Schools on Public Schools?
 - b. Do you have any positions, interests, or stances that you would like to tell me about?
 - c. Are there any viewpoints that you find particularly attractive or repelling?

Students.

1. Why did you choose to attend this charter school? Was the original reason the same or different than the current reason for staying? Please elaborate.

- a. What do you think of the various arguments and issues concerning the impact of Charter Schools on Public Schools?
- b. Do you have any positions, interests, or stances that you would like to tell me about?
- c. Are there any viewpoints that you find particularly attractive or repelling?

Personal Interview and Focus Group

Unstructured Question

1. What changes do you think have been brought about in public schools by the existence of this charter school?

Semi-structured Questions

1. Do you think that this charter school has been in existence long enough to determine what changes it has brought about in public schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
2. Do you think that the presence of this charter school has affected the diversity of schools for parents to choose from? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
3. Do you think that the presence of this charter school has affected the responsiveness of public schools to the needs of parents? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
4. What types of teachers do you think are attracted to working in charter? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

- a) What do you think about teachers teaching from prepared scripts? Is this an attack on their professionalism? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answers?
 - b) What do you think about charter school teachers not belonging to the ATA? Would this keep teachers from applying and remaining at charter schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
- 5. Do you think that this charter school has had a financial effect on public schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - 6. What types of students attend this charter school? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - 7. Do you think that charter schools are more or less accountable than public schools or similarly accountable? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - 8. Do you think that the \$400 per student/year busing fee will prohibit some interested families from attending? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - 9. What can public schools learn from this charter school to make them better? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - 10. Are there any other changes to public schools brought about by this charter school that you have not mentioned yet?

Public School Participants

Personal Interview

Introductory Questions

Parents.

1. Why did you choose to send your child(ren) to this public school? Was the original reason the same or different than the current reason for staying? Please elaborate
2. Where do you stand on the debate between those who claim that individual rights should overrule any common good and those who claim the opposite: that a democratically determined common good should supercede individual rights? Please elaborate.

Teachers/administrators.

1. Why did you choose to work at this public school? Was the original reason the same or different than the current reason for staying? Please elaborate.
2. Where do you stand on the debate between those who claim that individual rights should overrule any common good and those who claim the opposite: that a democratically determined common good should supercede individual rights? Please elaborate.

Students.

1. Why did you choose to attend this public school? Was the original reason the same or different than your current reason for staying?
2. Where do you stand on the debate between those who claim that individual rights should overrule any common good and those who claim the opposite: that a democratically determined common good should supercede individual rights?

Personal Interview and Focus Group

Unstructured question

1. What changes do you think have been brought about in public schools by the existence of this charter school?

Semi-structured questions

1. Do you think this charter school has been in existence long enough to determine what changes it has brought about in public schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
2. Do you think that the presence of this charter school has affected the diversity of schools for parents to choose from? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
3. Do you think that the presence of this charter school has affected the responsiveness of public schools to the needs of parents?
4. What types of teachers do you think are attracted to working in charter school? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - a. What do you think about teachers teaching from prepared scripts? Is this an attack on their professionalism? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
 - b. What do you think about charter school teachers not belonging to the ATA? Would this keep teachers from applying and remaining at charter schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
5. Do you think that this charter school has had a financial effect on public schools?

6. What types of students attend this charter school? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
7. Do you think charter schools are more or less accountable than public schools or similarly accountable? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
8. Do you think that the \$400 per student/year busing fee will prohibit some families from attending? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
9. What do you think about the fact that this charter school has stated in its charter that it did not accept students with special needs? What implications does this have for public schools? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.
10. Are there any other changes to public schools brought about by this charter school that you have mentioned yet that you would like to add?
11. What can public schools learn from this charter school to make them better? Please elaborate and give evidence for your answer.

APPENDIX B

**CORRESPONDENCE—LETTERS TO BOARDS OF EDUCATION, PRINCIPALS,
INTERVIEWEES, AND FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

Charter School Governing Board

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled “A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta”, with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school to improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting permission:

- (1) to pursue a study of the effects of your charter school on public schools, and of the lessons to be learned from your charter school that could improve public schools;
- (2) to solicit your participation in a personal interview and/or focus group;
- (3) to contact the executive assistant within your school to solicit his/her participation in a personal interview and focus group;
- (4) to contact the principal of your school to seek his/her participation in a personal interview and focus group, to seek the names of the most experienced teachers in your school to participate in personal interviews and/or a focus group, to seek the names of parents, who had a child previously enrolled in a public school and/or has a child attending your school for at least two years and nearing graduation and/or has a child in your school and at least one child in a public school, to participate in personal interviews and/or a focus group, and to seek the names of older students, preferably those approaching graduation, who have attended your school for at least two years to participate in a focus group. The principal will also be asked to furnish me with the names of public schools he/she thinks are the most affected by the presence of your school.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups, which will be approximately forty-five to sixty minutes each in length, and will occur at the convenience of the participants. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, the executive assistant, the principal, three teachers, and six parents. I would also like to conduct two focus groups. One group would be comprised of two board members, the executive assistant, the principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other group would be made up of six students. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between November, 2001 and January, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, a formal consent form will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school was purposely selected because of its stability. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of

the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback. All participants in the interviews will be asked to sign the Data/Transcript Release Form to indicate that they have had an opportunity to review the interview data, that they acknowledge that the data reflects what they said, and that they have authorized its release to the researcher.

This letter is to request formal permission to conduct this research in your school. In particular, permission is requested to contact the executive assistant and principal in your school. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2001, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to you. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

Board of Education
Calgary Public Schools

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school to improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting permission:

- (1) to pursue a study of the effects of a charter school on a number of your public schools, and of the lessons to be learned from a charter school that could improve your public schools;
- (2) to solicit your participation in a personal interview and/or focus group;
- (3) to contact a superintendent within your school system to solicit his/her participation in a personal interview and focus group;
- (4) to contact the principals of your schools, named by the principal of a charter school as being most affected by the existence of the charter school, to seek their participation in personal interviews and focus groups, to seek the names of the most experienced teachers in their schools, who taught a student now enrolled in the charter school under investigation, to participate in personal interviews and/or focus groups, to seek the names of parents, who are involved in their respective schools and would have an awareness of the charter school and its possible effects, to participate in personal interviews and/or focus groups, and to seek the names of students in the upper grades, who were classmates of students presently enrolled in the charter school under investigation, to participate in focus groups.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups, which will be approximately forty-five to sixty minutes each in length, and will occur at the convenience of the participants. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, a superintendent, three principals, three teachers from each school, and six parents with children in each school. I would also like to conduct six focus groups. Three groups would be comprised of two board members, a superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other three groups would be made up of six students from each school. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between January, 2002 and May, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, formal consent forms will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, these schools were purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between

charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the schools in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the schools involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback. All participants in the interviews will be asked to sign the Data/Transcript Release Form to indicate that they have had an opportunity to review the interview data, they acknowledge that the data reflects what they said, and that they have authorized its release to the researcher.

This letter is to request formal permission to conduct this research in your school system. In particular, permission is requested to contact the superintendents and principals in your schools. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2002, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to you. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

Principals Calgary Public Schools

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school to improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting your assistance in this study to:

- (1) solicit your participation in a personal interview and focus group;
- (2) solicit the participation of the most experienced teachers in your school, who taught a student now enrolled in the charter school under investigation, to participate in personal interviews and/or a focus group;
- (3) solicit the participation of parents, who are involved in your school who would have an awareness of the charter school and its possible effects, to participate in individual interviews and/or a focus group;
- (4) solicit the participation of students in the upper grades, who were classmates of students presently enrolled in the charter school under investigation, to participate in a focus group.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups, which will be approximately forty-five to sixty minutes each in length, and will occur at the convenience of the participants. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, a superintendent, three principals, three teachers from each school, and six parents with children in each school. I would also like to conduct six focus groups. Three groups would be comprised of two board members, a superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other three groups would be made up of six students from each school. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between January, 2002 and May, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, formal consent forms will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school was purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the schools in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the schools involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback. All participants in the interviews will be asked to sign the Data/Transcript Release Form to indicate that they have had an opportunity to review the interview data, they acknowledge that the data reflects what they said, and that they have authorized its release to the researcher.

This letter is to request your assistance in conducting this research in your school system. In particular, permission is requested to contact the superintendents and principals in your schools. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2002, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to your board. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

Principal
Charter School

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school to improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting your assistance in this study to:

- (1) solicit your participation in a personal interview and focus group;
- (2) solicit the participation of the most experienced teachers in your school to participate in personal interviews and/or a focus group;
- (3) solicit the participation of parents, who had a child previously enrolled in a public school and/or has a child attending your school for at least two years and nearing graduation and/or has a child in your school and at least one child in a public school, to participate in personal interviews and/or a focus group;
- (4) solicit the participation of older students, preferably those approaching graduation, who have attended your school for at least two years, to participate in a focus group.

You will also be asked to furnish me with the names of public schools you think are the most affected by the presence of your school.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups, which will be approximately forty-five to sixty minutes each in length, and will occur at the convenience of the participants. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, the executive assistant, the principal, three teachers, and six parents. I would also like to conduct two focus groups. One group would be comprised of two board members, the executive assistant, the principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other group would be made up of six students. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between November, 2001 and January, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, a formal consent form will also be given to their parent or guardian to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school was purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the

research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback. All participants in the interviews will be asked to sign the Data/Transcript Release Form to indicate that they have had an opportunity to review the interview data, they acknowledge that the data reflects what they said, and that they have authorized its release to the researcher.

This letter is to request your assistance in conducting this research in your school. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2001, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to your board. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

To: Interviewee, Charter School Respondents

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school that could improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting your participation in a personal interview to discuss the effects of a charter school on public schools and what lessons learned from your school that could improve public schools. I anticipate that the interview will last approximately forty-five to sixty minutes and take place at your convenience.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, the executive assistant, the principal, three teachers, and six parents. I would also like to conduct two focus groups. One group would be comprised of two board members, the executive assistant, the principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other group would be made up of six students. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between November, 2001 and January, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, a formal consent form will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school was purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through

the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback.

This letter is to request your assistance in conducting this research in your school. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2001, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to your board. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

To: Interviewees, Public School Respondents

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school that could improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting your participation in a personal interview to discuss the effects of a charter school on public schools. I anticipate that the interview will last approximately forty-five to sixty minutes and take place at your convenience.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, superintendent, three principals and six teachers and three parents with children in each school. I would also like to conduct six focus groups. Three groups would be comprised of two board members, a superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other three groups would be made up of six students from each of the three schools. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between January, 2002 and May, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, a formal consent form will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school was purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school involved in the study. Any

reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback.

This letter is to request your assistance in conducting this research in your school. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2001/2, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to your board. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

To: Focus Group Participants, Charter School

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school that could improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting your participation in a focus group session to discuss the effects of a charter school on public schools and what lessons learned from your school that could improve public schools. I anticipate that the focus group session will last approximately forty-five to sixty minutes and take place at your convenience.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, the executive assistant, the principal, three teachers, and six parents. I would also like to conduct two focus groups. One group would be comprised of two board members, the executive assistant, the principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other group would be made up of six students. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between November, 2001 and January, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, a formal consent form will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school was purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through

the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school involved in the study. Any reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback.

This letter is to request your assistance in conducting this research in your school. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2002, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to your board. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

To: Focus Group Participants, Public Schools

In fulfillment of the requirements to complete the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan, I am pursuing a research project entitled "A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta", with the permission of the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research. The research is aimed at determining the effects of a charter school on public schools and the lessons learned from a charter school that could improve public schools.

This is a letter requesting your participation in a focus group session to discuss the effects of a charter school on public schools. I anticipate that the focus group session will last approximately forty-five to sixty minutes and take place at your convenience.

This research will include personal interviews and focus groups. For the purposes of data collection, I would like to conduct personal interviews with a board member, superintendent, three principals and three teachers and six parents with children in each school. I would also like to conduct six focus groups. Three groups would be comprised of two board members, a superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and two parents. The other three groups would be made up of six students from each of the three schools. The personal interviews and focus groups would be audio-taped and take place between January, 2002 and May, 2002.

The purpose of the study, the involvement and time required, the use of the data, and the ethical procedures will be carefully explained to all participants. Each participant in the study will be given a letter outlining the purpose of the study, the time frame, his or her role in the study, and other relevant information. Included will be a letter of formal consent for each to sign and return. For students under the age of eighteen, a formal consent form will also be given to their parents or guardians to sign. Focus group participants will be asked to sign a consent form that contains a confidentiality clause.

For the purposes of this research study, this school system was purposely selected. Findings from the interviews and focus groups will be used to further discussions of the relationship between charter schools and the public education system. The data from the interviews and focus group sessions will be organized and coded into categories guided by the information sought in the research questions. It is anticipated that common features will emerge from the interview and focus group data.

There are no known risks resulting from the participation in this study. All participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study, how the findings will be documented, and that they will be able to withdraw from the study at any time. All information gleaned from the interview and focus group sessions will be kept confidential. Confidentiality in the focus group sessions will be procured by asking participants to sign a consent form acknowledging that the other participants are involved with the school in some way and that their responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say during the focus group session is essential. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and the school involved in the study. Any

reference to school sites and school board members, staff, or students will be deleted from quotations.

Throughout the investigation, an effort will be made to respect the rights and professional careers of those who participate. General ethics procedures outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Sciences Research will be followed with respect to guidelines concerning consent forms, confidentiality, release of transcribed data, freedom of participation, and opportunity for feedback.

This letter is to request your assistance in conducting this research in your school system. During the process of the study, either myself (306-922-3851) or my supervisor, Dr. Murray Scharf (306-966-7612) at the Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan, can be contacted if you have any questions.

Interview and focus group sessions are planned for the winter of 2001/2, and my goal is to complete my study by August, 2002. At that time, a copy of my dissertation will be made available to your board. I am available for further discussion at any time. Please call me if you wish any further clarification. Thank you for giving this request your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,

Rick Sawa

APPENDIX C

CONSENT AND DATA RELEASE FORMS

Letter of Consent for Personal Interview Participation

Name: _____

School: _____

Position: _____

I hereby agree to participate in the research to be conducted by Rick Sawa entitled *A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta* under the conditions set out in the letter of introduction. I understand that my participation involves a personal interview, and that information gathered may be used as data for publications related to this study. I understand that confidentiality will be maintained, as far as possible, and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, and without penalty of any type. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed data and that I may revise, delete, or add information and then sign the release form.

This research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on November 26, 2001, and any questions regarding one's rights as a participant may be addressed to this committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-4053).

I, _____, have read this form, and discussed this study with the researcher. By signing this form, I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Participant signature _____

Researcher signature _____

Date _____

Consent Form: Focus Group Participation

This is to certify that I voluntarily agreed to participate in *A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta* focus group. I understand the primary purpose of the focus group is to gather information about the effects a charter school has on public schools.

I understand that the other participants in these sessions are stakeholders within my school or school system and that I and other participants will be asked to keep confidential all information disclosed during the focus group. I acknowledge my responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say in the research sessions. I understand that these sessions will be audio-taped. I understand that, although there are limits to which the researcher can ensure the confidentiality of the information shared, names will not be associated with this data.

I understand that I may end my participation in this focus group at any time, for any reason, and without penalty of any type although it may not be possible to withdraw my input from the data.

The study has been explained to me. I have read the above information and have had an opportunity to ask any questions.

This research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on November 26, 2001, and any questions regarding one's rights as a participant may be addressed to this committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-4053).

I, _____, have read this form, give my consent to participate in this study, and have received a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Participant Name _____ Participant Signature _____

Researcher Signature _____ Date _____

**Student Assent & Parent/Guardian Consent Form:
Student Focus Group Participation**

For the Student

I have read about and discussed the study with the researcher. By signing this form **I give my assent** to participate in this focus group.

Student

Date

For the Parent

This is to certify that I gave permission to my child to participate in *A Case Study of the Perceived Changes to Three Public Schools Brought About by a Charter School in Calgary, Alberta* focus group. I understand the primary purpose of the focus group is to gather information about the effects a charter school has on public schools.

I understand that the other participants in these sessions are stakeholders within my child's school and that he/she and other participants will be asked to keep confidential all information disclosed during the focus group. I acknowledge my child's responsibility and agreement to protect the integrity and confidentiality of what others say in the research sessions. I understand that these sessions will be audio-taped. I understand that, although there are limits to which the researcher can ensure the confidentiality of the information shared, names will not be associated with this data.

I understand that my child may end his/her participation in this focus group at any time, for any reason, and without penalty of any type although it may not be possible to withdraw his/her input from the data.

The study has been explained to my child. He/she has read the above information and has had an opportunity to ask any questions.

This research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on November 26, 2001, and any questions regarding one's rights as a participant may be addressed to this committee through the Office of Research Services (306-966-4053).

I, _____, have read this form, give my consent to my child to participate in this study, and have received a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Researcher Signature _____

Data/Transcript Release Form – Personal Interviews

I, _____, have reviewed the transcribed data of my personal interview in this study and acknowledge that the transcribed data reflects what I said in my personal interview with Rick Sawa, Researcher. I hereby authorize the release of this transcribed data to Rick Sawa to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my records.

Participant _____

Date _____

Researcher _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

ETHICS APPROVAL



**UNIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON ETHICS IN BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE RESEARCH**

NAME: P. Renihan (R. Sawa)
Department of Educational Administration

BSC#: 2001-203

DATE: November 27, 2001

The University Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research has reviewed the revisions to the Application for Ethics Approval for your study "The Effects of a Charter School on Selected Public Schools" (01-203).

1. Your study has been **APPROVED**.
2. Any significant changes to your proposed study should be reported to the Chair for Committee consideration in advance of its implementation.
3. The term of this approval is for 5 years.
4. In order to maintain ethics approval, a status report must be submitted to the Chair for Committee consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics.shtml>.

I wish you a successful and informative study.

Valerie Thompson, Chair
University Advisory Committee
on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research

VT/bk